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CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES;

OR,

A VIEW

OF THE

PECULIAR BLESSINGS APPERTAINING TO THE BELIEVER IN CHRIST.

BY

T. LEWIS,

OF UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON,

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTIAN CHARACTERISTICS," "CHRISTIAN DUTIES," &c.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in Christ."

PAUL.

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1847.

ADVERTISEMENT.

WHEN the volume on "Christian Duties" followed that on "Christian Characteristics," the Author intimated that, if his life should be spared, and ability granted him, a future volume on "Christian Privileges" might probably close the series. He has been later in fulfilling that intimation than he had hoped to be; but unforeseen circumstances occurred to prevent the appearance of the "Privileges" until now: and while he is thankful for the acceptance the two preceding volumes have met with among his friends, and the religious public in general, he would more especially acknowledge his obligations to the Giver of all good, for permitting him to accomplish his design. This is most probably the last publication he will be allowed to make; he therefore embraces the present opportunity of very earnestly commending it, and every other of his works, to the blessing of the Most High, and the candour and kindness of his readers.

ADDRESS

TO THE

CHURCH AND CONGREGATION WORSHIPPING IN UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON.

My dear Christian Brethren,

The sacred and spiritual relation subsisting between you and me, seems to point you out as the proper objects of a dedicatory address, on the present occasion. You are a section of the visible Church of Christ, and a congregation of his worshippers. Many of you, I am happy to say, are of long standing, and well accredited in the Christian community; others, of later date. It has pleased the Divine Head and Lord of his Church, who put me into the ministry, so to bless and honour my labours, as to make them instrumental in bringing not a few of you within its pale. You, therefore, are my children in the Lord. Of you I daily think,—for you I daily pray. With parental solicitude I seek your spi-

ritual prosperity—your growth in grace—your faithfulness in every good word and work. To these all-important ends I have endeavoured to direct my ministrations among you. My speech and my preaching may not, indeed, have been characterized by "the enticing words of man's wisdom;" but if they have been followed by "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power," neither you nor I need to lament the absence of adventitious enticements.

You will all, I doubt not, bear me witness that I have not preached myself, but Christ Jesus, and myself your servant, for Jesus' sake. Yes; for *his* sake, and for the advancement of your spiritual interests, most willingly would I spend, and be spent; nor think the sacrifice worthy of being named, in comparison with what I owe to my Lord. Under this impression have I sought, in every picture I have drawn of the Gospel-dispensation, to place the Lord Jesus in the foreground, as the prime object of admiration and of love; as God's unspeakable gift—the great sum and substance of revealed truth, and the alone Saviour of souls. I have endeavoured to commend him to you, not simply as a Deliverer from condemnation, but as your Pattern for "wisdom, and

righteousness, and sanctification,"—not only as your High Priest, to make atonement for your sins, but as a Leader and Commander, whom it becomes you to follow and obey. And not satisfying myself with the ministrations of the pulpit only, I have, from time to time, as you well know, addressed you from the press, seeking thus, even when personally absent, to woo your more habitual attention to spiritual things. The press is a powerful instrument for working good or evil on the public mind; and thinking it to be *my* duty to avail myself of it for righteous and pious ends, I have ventured to do so, according to my limited ability, on several occasions. Among others, I have more especially pressed upon your notice the "Characteristics of the Christian," that you might be prompted to the important and salutary exercise of self-examination, and assisted in it to know yourselves. And then, as our Christianity is a *practical* religion, requiring not merely to *know*, but also to *do*, I thought it right to present you with a view of the "Duties" which the Church, which the world, and, above all, which your Lord himself expects you to fulfil, if you would be accepted of him as his disciples. The volumes containing these

matters are gone out to the public, with my fervent prayer to God, that he would be pleased to bless them to the promotion of his own glory, and the benefit of those to whom they might find access. Permit me, my dear Brethren, to urge your renewed attention to the subjects of which they treat. They are such as Christians cannot safely neglect; for they belong to their well-being for time and for eternity.

And now, while sending out the present volume with similar invocation of the Divine blessing, to render it not only acceptable, but profitable, wherever it may be perused, I do the more readily commend it to you, my Brethren, because of the opinion I entertain of your knowledge, and your standing in the faith. As the apostle John tells the believers to whom he wrote, so do I tell you, "I have not written to you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it." You have been instructed in the things that relate to the kingdom of heaven; and by the grace of God, many of you have been brought to embrace them. You, therefore, cannot fail to appreciate and relish the "Privileges" of the Christian; of much of which you are now, doubtless, the partakers. Let me hope, that as they

are here set before you, they will meet with a congeniality of feeling and sentiment in each of your hearts, and that warm welcome which is expressive of acquaintanceship and agreement.

The present occasion is probably the last on which I shall be permitted to come before you in this way. Bear with me then, while I add, that I have sought publicity in the few works that have passed from my hand, solely with a view the more entirely to serve my Divine Master and the cause of souls. I have no ambition for authorship, but as means for that end; and if such an object be, in any degree, promoted, I am satisfied—I am thankful. The works to which I have alluded, as well as every other effort I have been enabled to make, I leave at the disposal of Him for whose service they are intended. I leave them without anxiety, well knowing that the feeblest instrument in the hand of the Holy Spirit may be rendered efficient to the greatest and most valuable results. I say not this, however, in defiance of the judgment of my fellow-men on whatever may appear under my name. On the contrary, I gladly embrace this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging the kindness and candour I have hitherto met with

at the hands of the literary censors of the day. I mean only to say, that, though I highly esteem the approbation of the enlightened Reviewer, I cannot think it right for a servant of Christ to be deterred from undertaking any effort of which he entertains a hope, however humble, that his Master will receive it, and give it his sanction.

Finally, my beloved Brethren, farewell: and trusting what I now dedicate to you will be accepted with the same spirit in which it is presented, I pray that "the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make you perfect in every good work to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever." Amen.

Your affectionate Pastor,

T. LEWIS.

Islington,
April, 1847.

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CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES.

LECTURE I.

DELIVERANCES.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
ROM. viii. 1.

MOSES, to whom the welfare of Israel was dearer than his own life, closes his benediction of that people with this exclamation, "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thy enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." But this people, with all the wonderful interpositions of heaven in their favour; with their happy locality, "a land flowing with milk and honey;" and with their superior constitution, both civil and religious, were intended especially to typify and prefigure a better and more spiritual dispensation, by which they were to be succeeded. The main points of their history and

economy were a shadow of things to come. Christ and his Church were the substance. The honours and distinctions, in which that people gloried, pointed to the higher honours, the better distinctions, of the people of God under the Christian dispensation. The shadows were temporal and evanescent blessings; they are long since spent and gone. The substance consists in spiritual, incorruptible, never-fading privileges. The former state of things is described as "THE LAW GIVEN BY MOSES,"—the latter, as "GRACE AND TRUTH BROUGHT IN BY JESUS CHRIST." The distinctions and privileges of the Israelites, under the Mosaic dispensation, were *national*, and necessarily *limited;* the Christian privileges belong to every nation under heaven, knowing no limit throughout the family of man. Magnificent and splendid, then, as was the Jewish economy, when we come to contemplate the blessings of the Gospel, and the privileges of believers in Christ, we may with all propriety conclude, that "even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." In the economy which has answered its end, and passed away, there was also a character both of servility and sternness. The yoke which it imposed was grievous and burdensome, and not intended to be permanent. From that bondage, Christ, the founder of a better dispen-

sation, has set his people free. Hence the congratulations of the Apostle, as he contemplates the cheering contrast. "Ye are not come," he says, "to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire; nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest; but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven; and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." In this beautiful and sublime passage, the Apostle seems as though, in the ecstacy of his feelings, he would describe the very blessedness and glory of the heavenly state; and yet it is but the enunciation of privileges to which Christians are already come. And how is this? Truly, because the Church above and the Church below are ONE.

On much stronger grounds, therefore, than those which Moses had, may we exclaim, "Happy are ye, O Christians! who are like unto you, O people, saved by the Lord; whom the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen you in him, before the foundation of the world, that ye should be holy, and without blame before him in love!" Yes, the covenant

which the Lord graciously promised to make with his people, after the days of the *old* dispensation, the Apostle directly claims for believers in Christ under the *new*. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after these days, saith the Lord. I will put my law into their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

In proposing to treat of Christian Privileges, the difficulty is not in finding a sufficiency of them to engage our attention, for they are numerous; but how to cull and arrange them best for profitable meditation. It is but a limited portion of them we can embrace in the series of discourses now before us. For the sake of order, we may take leave to consider them as consisting of DELIVERANCES from evil achieved for the Christian, and GOOD THINGS, or BLESSINGS, conferred upon him.

The term PRIVILEGE supposes a distinction of persons, or of parties. There are some who do *not*, there are others who *do*, possess the Privilege. It is an investment in the person, or parties, by which he, or they, are entitled to some peculiar favour or advantage. Christian Privileges are of this description; and as they are all of them valuable and important—all essential to our well-being, for time and for eternity, it concerns us supremely to know who the parties are to whom they belong. The

Privileges, then, of which we speak are *spiritual* Privileges; and they who possess them are of a *spiritual character*. They are *Christian* Privileges, and are the possession of those who believe in Christ. Their's is a rank not inherited by family descent, nor conferred by any created authority. Their Privileges are held only of Divine grace: it is the prerogative of God alone to grant them. Nor are they claimed in right of any service performed, or to be performed, by those who possess them; they are the *gifts* of God—the expressions of his free and sovereign grace. Believers, the sole possessors, belonged originally to the common mass of rebels against God, "among whom also they all had their conversation in time past, in the lusts of their flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Like others, they were running the career of sin and death. Innumerable as are the crooked ways of spiritual apostacy, in all of them were many found, who subsequently escaped and returned to God. But their return was not effected by their own sagacity, in discovering their unnatural and unsafe position. They had not reasoned themselves into a disgust with the odiousness of their conduct and character, and thence into a resolution to surrender themselves to a holy God, from whom they felt they had revolted. No; to attribute their return to any self-instituted process would be to err greatly from the truth of God's word, and to ascribe to

sinful nature an achievement of which it is incapable. It is the Spirit of God only, who, by an instrumentality of his own appointment, convinces the sinner of his guilt, leads him, through repentance, to faith in Christ, and converts or reconciles him to himself. The man, to become a Christian, undergoes a change so radical in its nature, that nothing less than creative power can effect it. It is a creation of God upon the soul of man; and being *his* production, it resembles himself,—"that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In the subjects of this change, the order of things is reversed. In their former state, the flesh, with its corruptions, claimed and exercised the ascendancy; now the spiritual nature holds the flesh in subjection. The evil propensities are not altogether extirpated; but their power is broken: the better part struggles with them, wars against them, and prevails. They are no longer rightly denominated *carnal*, but *spiritual* characters: for the Spirit of God dwells in them; and where he dwells, he reigns. Henceforth his gracious influences give a new and better tendency to all the faculties and affections of their moral nature. Their love, their hatred, their hopes, their fears, their desires, their aversions, have all, in the main, new objects; and are all directed by new principles, the principles of the Gospel. Such, then, are the inheritors, the possessors, of Christian Privileges.

According to the plan proposed, the first class

of Privileges are DELIVERANCES achieved for the Christian; and these may be considered as consisting in deliverance—

I. From THE CONDEMNATION OF THE LAW, BY THE GRANT OF A FREE PARDON OF ALL SIN.

II. From THE POWER OF SIN.

III. From THE LOVE OF SIN.

IV. From THE POLLUTION OF SIN.

V. From THE STING OF DEATH.

I. We observe, then, that believers are delivered from THE CONDEMNATION OF THE LAW, BY THE GRANT OF A FREE PARDON OF ALL SIN.

When it pleased the adorable Creator that sentient and intelligent beings, capable of knowing and serving him, should exist in his universe, and exist for his own glory, it was needful that there should emanate from himself a revelation of his mind and will, for the rule of their obedience. The nature and condition of their being required it. Possessing faculties for acquiring knowledge, and acting on principle, it followed that discoveries should be made, and a standard fixed, on which their faculties might be duly exercised. The order and harmony of the Divine government, the development of his wisdom and goodness in his entire economy, and the progressive excellence and happiness of his intelligent universe, required it. Thus did the wise and kind Creator deal with man. A revelation of his mind, or, in other words, a LAW was given him,

for his guidance and government—a Law, perfect—a commandment, holy, just, and good. Proceeding, as it did, from a wise and benevolent Legislator, and being a transcript of his own character, its end and object could be no other than the highest possible good. Conformity of character to that Law in the creature is the good intended. Thereby is the glory of God, the Legislator, declared, and the creature's utmost perfection and happiness are secured. Man, therefore, coming from the hand, and in the image of his Maker, was qualified at once to read the Divine wisdom and goodness in all the objects around him; and to pass from the contemplation of the visible universe to communion with its Author. He saw the whole, as God had produced it, to be "very good." With the benevolence and happiness he everywhere beheld, the affections of his heart harmonized; and why? because they harmonized with the mind and purpose of God himself. As the intelligent creature of God, he felt himself a moral agent, and rendered the homage due to his Creator with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind. During this happy state of things, he thought not of disputing the right of God to legislate for him. He waited for his Law with filial submission, and found it his highest interest to observe it wholly.

But, alas! in this honour he did not abide. This holy and exalted state was lost. In an evil hour, he listened to the seductions of the enemy; and, breaking the Law of his God, defiled himself with sin, and

fell. The consequence was, that having been constituted the federal head and representative of his posterity, he brought the condemnation of a broken Law upon himself and them. The image of God is now effaced from the soul; the moral state of man is altogether changed. Instead of innocence and rectitude, there is a consciousness of guilt generating fear, with estrangement from, and dislike to, the character and government of God. The affections of the heart cleave to worthless and unholy objects; the will refuses to obey; the whole mind is carnal, and at enmity with God. Such is the sad reverse to which the fall has reduced mankind. But the fall of man involved no necessity for a change in the Law of God. Emanating, as it did, from infinite wisdom and goodness, and therefore adapted to effect the best interests of the creature, as well as the glory of the Creator, it could not be changed without impairing its excellence. It was perfect, and, admitting of no improvement, alteration must have marred it. Its end and object would have been frustrated; man's holiness and happiness would not have been provided for; and God would have lost his glory. The Law, therefore, remits nothing of its claims. A full and perfect obedience to its demands—an entire conformity to its spirit is still exacted. "It is easier," says the Saviour, "for heaven and earth to pass away, than one tittle of the Law to fail." Yet no merely human being, since the fall, has ever answered, or can answer, its de-

mand. The attempt to do so, whenever made, proves utterly vain; for it is not in creatures, whose natural tendency is only evil, and that continually, to produce the perfect, spotless, undeviating rectitude which the Law requires.

Such being the acknowledged state of the case—the Law unalterable and uncompromising in its character, and man, universal man, the violator of that Law, condemnation must, of necessity, lie upon all. The denunciation of the Law is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law, to do them." The Scripture hath therefore concluded all under sin. We are "all by nature the children of wrath;" and had the Law been permitted to take its course, no sufficient Surety interposing, justice would have passed the irrevocable doom of condign punishment on the whole human race. "The commandment, which was (originally) ordained to life, is found (being broken by sin) to be unto death." Nor was there aught in the condition of man to avert the dreadful issue. Helpless in himself, and in every created resource, his case was desperate. But, thanks be to God! while he is inflexibly just, and inviolably true, he is also rich in mercy, and abundant in grace. Though himself the offended party, he found a Surety; and the gracious proclamation was made, "Deliver from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom!" The heaven-provided Surety paid the ransom; he was *himself* the ransom.

In undertaking this cause, our Surety had to commit himself to conditions of the most important and arduous, and, at the same time, of the most humiliating and painful nature. Every iota of the Law was to be fulfilled: its penalties were to be endured; its holy, just, and good character was to be magnified and made honourable; and the adorable attributes of the Deity—his holiness, his truth, his justice—were to be brought into harmony with his pity, his mercy, and his grace. All these were effected by the Son of God, in our nature, and in our stead. Hence believers are pardoned and "justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood."

To be justified, however, in the sense of the Apostle, is obviously not, after trial had according to Law, to be declared *innocent.* No; it has been already shown that all have rebelled, and broken the law: no man therefore can pass through any process to make him really and absolutely guiltless. An acquittal from the condemnation of the Law of God is a Deliverance from the charge of sin, not a declaration of innocence. The awakened and convinced sinner, sensible of his guilt, and of his utter want of means to atone for any one sin, hears the Divine announcement, "Jesus Christ, the righteous, is the propitiation for sins;" and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, repents and believes; abandons every other hope; relies on, and pleads, the all-suf-

ficient and only Atonement, and becomes the happy subject of pardon and acceptance. He is, indeed, *legally* innocent; the Law has no demand upon him; even Justice acquits him; for, being now found in Christ, there is no condemnation to him; and he, who before was deeper dyed than crimson or scarlet in the stains of sin, is now, in the all-sufficient Atonement, made pure as the stainless wool, and whiter than the driven snow.

For this Deliverance the contrite believer holds himself an eternal debtor to free grace. Conscious of his inherent guilt and helplessness, he lays no claim to any efficiency in himself. He is fully aware that it is in virtue of his union with Christ, the accepted substitute, that Law and Justice are satisfied in his case, and that reconciliation is now effected. So far from harbouring the thought of a personal right, he rejoices most of all that his justification, or deliverance from the condemnatory power of the Law, is wholly of a gracious character. It creates in his heart the best of all affections which the creature can cherish towards his Creator—*a grateful love.* Most gladly does he ascribe the glory to God; and says, with mingled confidence and delight, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that dieth; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us."

Happy man! To him that face which he once dreaded to approach—the face of a righteous, a sin-avenging God—is now brightened up into the smile of forgiveness and favour. He to whom his terrified conscience made him cry out, "Lord! I heard thy voice, and was afraid," now beams upon him the attractive features of a Father and a Friend. Thus blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. His condemnation is removed, and his soul delivered, by a plan and a power, a Substitute and a Sacrifice, to which nothing less than Divinity was equal. In all these the entire Godhead is put forth. The Father, though denouncing sin by the terrors of his Law, yet, in his self-moved compassion and unpurchased love, sends his Son, to reconcile the world to himself: the Son voluntarily becomes a Day's-man between the Sovereign and the rebel, offering, with one hand, a satisfaction to heaven, and with the other, a Deliverance to the returning sinner: and the Holy Spirit employs his effectual agency in quickening and convincing the sinner; and, by impressing him with a sense of his danger and his need, leads him to Christ, and puts him in possession of relief, through faith in his atonement.

Now this is the undoubted privilege of *every* believer; though we mean not to say that every one enjoys a full assurance that he is the possessor of such a blessing. The graces of the Spirit do not reign with equal prominence in all the people

of God, nor are they at all times equally vigorous in the same Christian. Faith, though genuine, may be weak: it may be obscured with fears and doubts; and the prayer of the disciples may often be needful, "Lord, increase our faith!" These fears and doubts, however, do not respect the testimony of God, or the promises he has given. In them the Christian reposes unshaken confidence, and is fully assured that he both can, and will, fulfil them all. But this is quite compatible with some trembling fears as to the saving character of his own faith, and his right to appropriate the promises to himself. Yet Christians may, and not a few of them do, arrive at this much-to-be-desired attainment. When the fruits of a ready and active devotedness to Christ are displayed in the life, a lively and vigorous faith will operate in the heart, and a delightful assurance of interest in the love of the Lord Jesus will be graciously afforded. It is, if I may so say, the recompense of an ardent, exemplary, and fruitful, piety—the result of a close, cautious walk with God; so that the soul is enabled to hold intimate communion with him, and to receive the pledge and earnest of the heavenly inheritance—the hope that is full of immortality—the joy that no man taketh from him. But, however this may be with some Christians, all are invited to aim at this full assurance. "Forgetting the things which are behind," they are called to reach forth to those things "which are before," and to "press towards the mark,

for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." They are urged to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, by embodying in their life and conversation the heavenly, holy, and benevolent principles of the Gospel of Christ; and they are warranted to indulge the confidence that they are pardoned, justified, and accepted in the Beloved.

Fellow-sinner! how desirable is a Deliverance from the condemnation of a broken Law! Knowing that it is essential to your salvation, we pray you to seek it with all importunity,—and to seek it aright is to find it; for God willeth not your death. He invites you to your Deliverance. He is a "God ready to pardon," and waits to be gracious. "Christ also is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Come, then, as all his people have come, and the privilege will be your's.

II. The believing Christian is delivered from the POWER OF SIN.

The universal depravity of man, to which we have already alluded, is not more plainly the doctrine of holy Scripture, than the unavoidable deduction of common observation. The history of the world, or the details of the public and private life of individuals, in every grade of society, are only so many illustrations of the melancholy truth. The appeal may be made to every man's conscience, and,

if honestly responded to, the confession will be, "In many things we all offend." This doctrine, however, admits of a cheering qualification. There are those of our race where the depraving principle receives an effectual check—where its reign is destroyed. The two grand divisions of mankind are the righteous and the wicked. Among the latter, a fearfully large party, sin reigns with undisputed sway. Among the former, though not entirely extirpated, its ascendancy is subdued; its power is broken: while every man in an unregenerate state, however indignantly he may repel the charge, is the slave of sin; it masters him, in one form or other, throughout his entire being. It beclouds and darkens his understanding; so that he cannot perceive the beauty and desirableness of Divine truth: it defiles his imagination; so that his fondest thoughts are only evil: it corrupts the feelings and affections of his heart; so that he dislikes the things that be of God: it distorts and misleads his will; so that he refuses obedience to the Gospel: it hardens and stupifies his conscience; so that he is insensible to the danger of his state: and as to the words of his mouth and the actions of his life, he says, or seems to say, in the proud defiance of his heart, "Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us? or what is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?"—Debasement, how deplorable! infatuation, how awful! See how the unhallowed passions

drag their victim on in the career of sin and folly!—Ambition, or the lust of power, to obtain the prize, and to become great, puts him on deeds of oppression, injustice, and cruelty.—Avarice, or the lust of wealth, to make him rich, subjects him to grovelling drudgery, dishonesty, and sordid meanness of soul.—Sensuality, to gratify his fleshly appetites, drives him after his guilty pleasures, like an ox to the slaughter, and dooms him to wallow in moral pollution, an object of loathsomeness, in the sight of God and man! And mark how pride, and wrath, and malice, and envy, enslave, and domineer over the minds and hearts of the unhappy mortals, where they have obtained a cherished residence!—how they hurry away their helpless captives at their will, and force them, as the demoniacs were forced of old, to works of self-mischief and fearful madness!

But when the man is awakened by the Spirit of God to know and feel his real position, is made aware of its danger, and induced to flee from it by faith and repentance to the Redeemer, the chains of his moral slavery are broken. He changes masters—in truth, he is *himself* changed. He is no longer what he was. He has passed through a regeneration, by which he becomes a new creature. He is "born of God, and he doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." He cannot sin as he sinned before, with the full bent and relish of his mind. Evil, indeed, may be, and often is, present with him,

when he would do good; but this he laments, and regards it as the hated remains of his old nature, which he is longing and striving to throw off. "He delights in the law of God, after the inward man," though there is still "a law in his members" that aims to bring him back into bondage; but that aim will not prevail. The emancipated slave, having tasted the sweets of liberty, and known something of the rights and liberties of a free man, will never consent to be bound and fettered by his old task-master again. The Christian is too happy, in escaping from the thraldom of sin, to be its willing servant any more. He had found that the way of transgressors is hard; that the path of sin is the path of sorrow; that there was indeed "no peace to the wicked;" that the wages of Satan's service were unprofitableness, degradation, wretchedness, and woe. He has exchanged the yoke of Satan for the yoke of Christ; and his happy experience now pronounces his yoke to be easy, and his burden to be light. When he looks back upon his former drudgery, and thinks with shame of its miserable fruits,—how he toiled under the dominion of sinful passions—how he was filled with restless desires and vexatious apprehensions—how he was sent upon unholy pursuits, and made to labour in iniquity, and to reap vanity, and feed on ashes—in fine, how all his former life was a course of galling, frightful servitude, ultimately leading to death and hell,—he is filled with wonder at the forbearance and

mercy of God in his case, and has not language to express the gratitude and gladness of his heart for the Deliverance achieved for him. Happy Deliverance! It is comparatively a small thing whether, in our temporal condition, we are bond or free. But spiritual freedom is of the highest moment—it is for our life. Without this freedom, the soul is in captivity, and under the dominion of the evil principle. We may imagine ourselves free—we may glory in a fancied independence of spirit, and boast that we were never in bondage to any man; but we are walking according to the course of this world—according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. We are therefore the captives of the mighty, the prey of the terrible one. "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?" In other words, "Are ye not aware, that, whatever ye may affirm, or however fondly ye would persuade yourselves to the contrary, ye are the servants of him to whose will ye have resigned yourselves, and whose works ye do?" Men deceive themselves by giving false names to their principles and practices. Compliance with the flattery and deception of the world is called politeness: the love and pursuit of the world's pelf are virtuous industry, and praiseworthy foresight against future need; and even gross licentiousness and sensuality are apologised for, and coloured over,

under the specious character of good fellowship and innocent gratification. These are fearful delusions, that mask and conceal the murderers of the soul. O how it becomes us to be awake, and to look to our actual condition! Let us examine the state of our own hearts, and the course of life we are pursuing. Let us test them by the word of God; and wherever conscience points to a deviation from that word, or to any tyrant-passion that holds us in thraldom, let us take the alarm, and call earnestly on Him, who is stronger than "the strong man armed," until he shall "come upon him, and take from him all his armour wherein he trusted," and set us free.

Believers, this Deliverance is not your own conquest. Had you been left to achieve your own emancipation, you must have remained for ever the slaves of Satan. The glory of your Deliverance belongs to Christ. "His right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." Be glad; but be humble, be vigilant, be cautious. See, you are brought out from bondage; turn not in your hearts back again into Egypt. You have already suffered from the deceitfulness of your own hearts; trust them no more. You have been allured by the world into the ranks of the enemy; renounce for ever that fruitful source of temptation. You have already perilled your souls under Satanic delusions; watch and pray against your arch adversary for the future; resist him, and he will flee from you. Being now alive from the dead, the apostolic

injunction is solemnly binding upon you, "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof." And while you are thus diligent to maintain your spiritual freedom, rely on the strength of Christ to keep you from falling, and be assured that, under all your trials, infirmities, and temptations, "sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

III. The Christian is delivered from the Love of Sin.

It is not by presenting a picture, however truly and powerfully drawn, of the debasement, the wretchedness, the slavery of sin, nor even by showing, however convincingly, its ruinous consequences, that we can hope to dissolve or to break its chains. The sinner's heart is in love with sin. You may tell him of its drudgery,—in that drudgery he delights. Describe to him its nauseous and degrading character; he believes it not, for there is an infatuation in love. Threatenings and reasonings fail alike to break the spell; the sweet slavery is still pertinaciously preferred. The world, and the things of the world, fill and interest the sinner's heart. He clings to them as to his all. They have engrossed all his desires, all his pursuits; nor has he a taste, or a relish, for anything above or beyond them. Unless what ministers to "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of his eyes, and the pride of

life," he knows of nothing that can engage his attention, far less become an object of his love. The moralist and the preacher may remonstrate with him on the folly and danger of abiding by such a choice. They may beseech him to consider his ways, and not to risk his eternal interests on things so unsatisfactory and evanescent; he will say, with a reckless and desperate obstinacy, "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." This fascination will abide in all its strength, until some other and greater attraction come into competition with it.

But let that attraction be presented;—let him be made to see the love of God towards the souls of sinners, expressed by the mission of his Son to redeem them; show him the mighty cost at which the Son effected, and willingly effected, the great redemption; and point him to the offer which God makes him, in his own word, of the free pardon of his sins, of his adoption into his paternal love through Jesus Christ, and of eternal bliss and glory as the consummation of the whole;—then, as the Spirit of God impresses these soul-melting views of the Gospel on the heart of the sinner, he yields to the superior claims of a redeeming God, withdraws his love from a sinful and worthless world, and fixes it upon the better and more enduring substance. Now sin loses its attractive show; it appears in its proper hue and form, and becomes "exceedingly sinful." He is now conscious of a

desire after God, and that expels the desire after the world. The love of God shed abroad in his heart kindles a grateful love to him in return, which is incompatible with the love of sin. He is like one who, having been long confined to a sphere of desire and pursuit which, though narrow, seemed to him to contain all that deserved the toil and ambition of man, and upon one or another portion of which he was expending all the energies of his nature, is now brought out into a wealthier place—an ampler region, abounding in prizes infinitely fairer, more exalted and satisfying than anything he had formerly known. The surprising beauty of his new condition eclipses all the former vision. His affections are now drawn to the lovelier objects before him; and he no longer retains a relish for "the things whereof he is now ashamed." Delivered from the love of sin, he is attracted by the beauty of holiness, and aspires to its possession; and as he indulges this enlightened affection, he wonders at his former infatuation, and the long-suffering mercy of God towards him. He admires the grace that interposed to dissolve the unholy connexion, and feels himself bound, under the most solemn obligations, to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind. His deepest regret is, that he yet comes far short of this greatest, this paramount obligation. But the flame still rises, fed with the oil of heavenly grace; and though it burn not so vigorously, or so intensely, as

he desires, yet "many waters cannot quench it; neither can the floods drown it." It is under the operation of this high and holy principle that the love of sin is cast out of the heart. And the more freely that principle prevails, the more is the evil feeling of selfishness subdued; and the love of God's people, and sympathy towards the souls of men, and readiness to promote their best interests, are engendered and nursed within him: for he that is born of God, not only loves all of the same family, but, partaking of the Divine nature, longs after universal good. Like his heavenly Father, he "would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." There is no room in such a heart for the love of sin.

Christians, the love of God, which extirpates the love of sin, warms, enlivens, and invigorates every other grace of the Spirit. Faith works by love; and all acceptable obedience is the fruit of love. If, then, ye would shine as lights in the world, and adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things, cherish the predominance of this heavenly grace, this master-principle—the love of God, in your hearts. Watch and pray against every tendency to indifference or coldness towards him or his service. Examine yourselves from time to time. Let the perfect pattern of your Divine Master be ever before you. Dress yourselves by it. Follow his steps; copy all his inimitable qualities; imbibe his spirit of supreme love to the Father, and

active benevolence towards mankind. So doing you will cultivate the spirit that reigns above; your daily meditations on the dealings of God with you will be sweet; you will "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God."

IV. The Christian is delivered from the POLLUTION OF SIN.

In every form and degree of it, sin is moral pollution; and every unregenerated sinner is, in the sight of God, a polluted creature. He has contracted that which is directly opposed to holiness. Holiness is cleanness and purity;—sin is uncleanness and impurity. The element in which the sinner lives is that of defilement; and the defilement is total. Of such as so live, the Apostle says, "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled." They are described as men of corrupt minds; people of unclean lips, whose throat is an open sepulchre; who are given up to evil affections, and who walk after the flesh. There is nothing pure, because nothing godly, in their predilections or pursuits; not even in the confessedly higher departments of intellectual or scientific engagements, nor in the homage they may occasionally pay to charity, to benevolence, or to religion. "God is not in all their thoughts"—not so as to sanctify their doings. From him they still remain at a proud distance—

still abide by their treasonable apostacy and foul revolt. What are all their pretended virtues? In the sight of God, who judges not as men judge, because he sees not as men see, they are abominations. What is their industry, but sordid avarice? What their alms-deeds,—what their prayers, but vile hypocrisy? Or, what are even their patriotic achievements, but a mean ambition to be praised of men? These are all prompted by low and carnal motives. They come not from the acceptable and sanctifying principles of supreme love to God, and disinterested affection towards man; and consequently have, all of them, the taint of sin,—and the fouler and deeper is the taint, where any of them are performed under pretence of doing God service. These are especially hateful; and he puts them away from him, in terms of deepest abhorrence. "Bring me," he says, "no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moon and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting."

Such, however, is the sad state of man by nature! How needful, then—how essential to his safety is it to know the way of deliverance from it! Thanks be to God! there *is* a way, and that a plain way. It is also a sure way, for God himself has appointed it. But it is the *only* way; by no other can it be effected. Men, indeed, seek out many inventions; and devise ways of their own, to stand clean before God. They tax their ingenuity to construct sys-

tems indulgent to their own appetites, yet soothing to their consciences. Proud, though polluted; and self-righteous, though loathsome in the sight of God, they despise the call to repentance, and reject the laver provided in the Gospel. Rather than chasten and humble their souls at the cross of Christ, or look to the blood of him who suffered thereon for cleansing, they will do acts of penance, bring offerings to the shrine of charity, and make liberal sacrifices to institutions of benevolence and religion. Like the boastful Pharisee, they will fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all they possess; and then, for these merits, presume on an acquittal before heaven. Alas! these are the subterfuges of pride and unbelief; they will avail them nothing. They are not only in direct opposition to the character and counsel of God, but are the most offensive aggravations possible of the guilt and pollution they are intended to remove, or conceal. In vain do men attempt an imposition on the all-seeing God. "Their webs shall not become garments; neither shall they cover themselves with their works." "None," says an old writer, "none are so ugly in the eye of God, as they who paint for spiritual beauty." Such attempts insult the majesty and holiness of the Divine nature, and are pointedly and severely denounced. "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God; how canst thou say, I am not polluted?"

But the penitent sinner, humbled under the convincing power of the Holy Spirit, is too sensible of the deep defilement he has contracted by sin, and of its glaring notoriety to Him with whom he has to do, to attempt either palliation or self-cleansing. He is brought to so overpowering a view of God's holiness, that, when he thinks of his own pollution, he is ready to exclaim, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" He therefore repudiates every false refuge; and so far from seeking to justify himself to God, he feels that there is no depth of abasement to which he ought not to fall before him; and confesses, with Job, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands ever so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch; and my own clothes shall abhor me!"

The Spirit of God, however, does not abandon him to a hopeless and helpless contemplation of his deep pollution. He is brought thus low, that he may be lifted up. He is made to see the horrible pit and the miry clay into which his sins had sunk him, that he may cry out for, and obtain, deliverance. But this is not effected by allowing him to throw the painful reflection of his moral defilement away from him. Painful as it is, it cannot be chased away, till the same light that discovered it to him shall have pointed him to the only fountain

opened for sin and for uncleanness. The consciousness of his defilement will still oppress him, till that fountain is approached. The Holy Spirit, whose office it is to convince of sin, is also the Author of that faith by which the sinner gladly avails himself of the remedy, washes in the fountain divinely opened for him, and comes forth with "a clean heart, and a conscience purged from dead works, to serve the living God." Here, and here only, does he find ablution from all defilement. This fountain is exclusively possessed of the needful efficacy. It is a fountain of blood,—"the blood of the everlasting covenant—the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." The deep stain and pollution of sin required to be washed out, and cleansed away by vital blood: for "without shedding of blood is no remission;" and because none else was of sufficient richness and dignity, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in our nature, shed his own. Then was opened that fountain predicted by the prophets; and ever since its opening preached, by apostles and ministers of the Gospel, unto this day; and which will continue to be preached, till the last of the redeemed shall wash therein, and be clean. Yes, prophets and apostles agreed in proclaiming the virtues of this fountain for purification and redemption; and *we* declare its virtues to be still the same, in unimpaired efficacy and undiminished richness. "The blood of Christ has ever cleansed, and cleanses *now*, from all sin."

Another Deliverance awaiting the Christian is—

V. From the STING OF DEATH.

What is it that gives death the power to sting? The Apostle answers the question,—"The sting of death is sin." Because of the dread with which a guilty conscience invests it, it is styled "the King of Terrors." Death is, indeed, to all of us a subject of solemn contemplation. It brings a gloom over the spirits of most. We naturally shrink from dissolution. There is something appalling in the idea of the extinction of our present being—of an utter breaking up of all our connexions here, and of that closest, dearest, and most intimate union of all—the union of body and soul!

> "Nature runs back, and shudders at the sight,
> And every life-string bleeds at thoughts of parting!"

Such is the common feeling; but to the unregenerate sinner, the thought of death is peculiarly distressful and terrifying. He never *voluntarily* calls it to mind; and whenever it is suggested to him, he impatiently dismisses it, as a hateful intrusion. If events more than usually solemn occur to force the thought of his latter end upon him, he industriously labours to ward off the unwelcome impression—to efface it in the bustle of business, or drown it in the stupefactions of gaiety and dissipation. He tries every expedient to put it away from him, as the disturber of his peace—the enemy of his enjoy-

ments. Alas! the infatuated creature is but too frequently successful in these sinful efforts. The gloomy intruder is quickly expelled from his mind. The thought that might have proved the most salutary that ever passed through it—that might have been made admonitory to his present and everlasting welfare, is scared away, that he may be left to the undisturbed possession of vanity and vice, and hardness of heart. The dove of purer wing and softer note can obtain no lodgment in a cage of unclean birds, that breed and riot there in all their ferocity and foulness. The wilful sinner will brook no check upon his lusts and inclinations. He has set his heart upon the world; all his pursuits are confined to the things of time. These he *will* prosecute, at the risk of all beyond. He hates all admonition to the contrary; treats as impertinence every hint of a serious or spiritual character; and lives as though he had made "a covenant with death," or as if, by not thinking of it, he would altogether avert its approach. Thus he befools himself, until the day—the hour which he thought not of arrives. It arrives, and finds him unprepared; he is still clinging to life—to the world—to its business—to its pleasures, and the various schemes he had laid, concocted, and vainly hoped to realize. What! must he be torn from them all—from everything upon which he had set his heart, and around which all his thoughts, and wishes, and hopes had clustered? And, what is infinitely more intolerable,

must he be hurried away into an unknown and unthought of eternity? Must his never-dying soul, whose interests he has neglected, be dragged out of its loved and fondly-cherished tenement, to meet its offended God,

"The Witness of its actions now its Judge?"

Dreadful, indeed, is such a moment to a sinner in such a case! He now feels that his thoughtless, vain, ungodly, life has been arming death with a formidable sting against himself. That sting now pierces and pains him, in every view he takes of his condition. He looks back upon his past life, and curses the folly, that made him averse to serious thought—the earthliness of mind, that made him prefer gain to godliness—and the fascinations of the world, that made him turn away every cautionary, every heavenly, monitor. Now, "at the last, he mourns; and when his flesh and his body are consuming, he says, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof!" Now self-crimination and remorse come upon him, for his madness, in having so often said unto God, "Depart from me; for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." And oh! the prospect before him!—he cannot endure it!—It is too horrifying to contemplate,—the awful tribunal—the holy, just, omniscient, Judge—the righteous condemnation—the fearful sentence—and the intolerable realities of that place, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

These, these, are the stings with which sin has furnished death! Ah! the anguish they carry into the conscience-smitten sinner, at such an hour, is not to be described!

We are aware, indeed, that it is not precisely thus that *all* the wicked close their mortal career. Some of them may have disciplined and hardened their minds to a stoical, stupid indifference on the subject of death, and may exhibit the appearance of braving it at the last. Some are flattered, by fond relatives and false or mistaken friends, into "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:" and many of them, dying under the influence of disease that debilitates the powers of the mind, and unfits it for rational thought, seem to depart in peace. But though, in such cases, they may be said to have "no bands in their death," and to have escaped the horror which a just perception of their actual condition would have excited; yet it is no less true that *insensibility* is not *immunity*, nor is *delusion* a *deliverance*. "The wicked," whatever the deception practised, "is driven away in his wickedness." It is the righteous only that hath well-founded "hope in his death." Nor do the cases of calmness we have just alluded to frequently characterize the latter end of the wicked: by far the more common experience of that unhappy class of men, dying with their senses duly awake, is that of alarm and horror,—a consciousness of awful demerit in the sight of a holy God; and a conse-

quent fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.

If these things are so, need I ask whether we can too highly estimate the privilege of him who meets death without a sting? And who is thus privileged? We have said that it is the believer in Christ. He is not exempt from death; but to him death is harmless. With whatever terrors the guilty fears of the many may array the grim messenger, the Christian, in the exercise of his faith, welcomes his coming. He is in the attitude of one waiting for him; and cannot, therefore, be taken by surprise. He meets the order to depart without dismay. It may be that he is even looking out for it, with a longing heart, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which to him is far better than to remain in the flesh. Not that he is discontented or disgusted with the life allotted him in the world; for in it he has made it his happiness and honour to serve God and his generation: but his increased longing after deliverance from the restraints and infirmities of the body, and after a perfect conformity to his blessed Redeemer, makes him more than willing that his earthly house of this tabernacle should be dissolved, and that his purified and happy spirit should ascend to that building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Such a man is at ease when he speaks of death. He is far, however, from being one of those who speak of it, in proud and lofty

terms, as an event which it becomes the spirit of a man to brave. He does not coldly philosophize upon it, as a debt he owes to nature, in common with all mankind. Nor does he, as a Christian, claim exemption from its sting, in right of any merit of his own; nor will he advance to the conflict, trusting to the strength and courage of his own heart, to overcome the monster, and forcibly deprive him of his sting. No, in none of these ways is the Christian privileged with a stingless death. His trust is in the Lord his God. He has cast himself on his mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ, who not only died *for* him, but showed him *how* to die. He beholds in his death and resurrection a glorious conquest over death itself. His faith appropriates that conquest; and he triumphs in the triumph of his Saviour. Reduced, it may be, to utter helplessness in himself, he realizes his union with Christ, and says, "When I am weak, then am I strong;" for it is in the very consciousness of his own weakness that he more especially feels Christ to be his strength. It was in the strength of Christ he pursued his course through life. In his strength he successfully maintained the Christian warfare. All his victories over sin, Satan, the world, and himself, were achieved by the strength of Christ in him; and now, wrapped in the righteousness, and girded with the strength of a Redeemer mighty to save, he looks on death with solemnity, yet without dread. "Yea," says he,

"though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory, through my Lord Jesus Christ!"

In this hour of need, the Holy Spirit brings to his mind the rich and precious promises of his word with new freshness and power. His faith now holds them with firmer grasp. His heart drinks in the cheering words with warmer thankfulness than ever, as addressed immediately to himself, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." And with inexpressible sweetness do these promises now come to soothe and cheer him, when he reflects, that He who spake them did himself encounter the fires and floods of this solemnly trying hour! that his Redeemer, not only put on all the sinless infirmities of humanity, but tasted death itself, "that he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil;" and that, as he passed through the domains of the last enemy, he stripped him of his terrors, made the grave a bed of repose for the mortal re-

mains of the souls he redeemed, and secured a free passage for them, under the conduct of angels, to his kingdom of glory. Surely such a prospect as this gives even the character of *life* to death—of *immortality* to the tomb!

But this is not all. While the dying Christian contemplates a happy issue to his last conflict, he is taught to look far beyond it, to the glorious consummation—the redemption of the body, at the general resurrection. The outward and feeble frame is now the prey of disease and death; it is hastening to decay and corruption: but his faith exults in the splendours of the coming morn, "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality," and the saying that is written shall have been brought to pass, "Death is swallowed up in victory." What room for a sting in the heart of one occupied with such anticipations?

In this view of the privilege of the true Christian at death, there is a sublimity that sets it far above the case of every other. The scene opened to *his* mind is no figment of the imagination: it is a revelation from the God of truth; and he cannot doubt it. It is a scene of grandeur and glory, in his conceptions of which he is in no danger of extravagance; for the utmost efforts of his imagination fall infinitely short of the truth. To the height and majesty of this theme he strives to rise, till he is lost in adoring wonder and grateful praise, and

the exclamation bursts from his lips, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

We grant, on the other hand, that there are cases, among genuine Christians, where, in the immediate prospect of death, much mental suffering is endured. A constitutional timidity of spirit, prostration of physical strength, or the fiery darts of the Evil One, then multiplied against them, not unfrequently oppress and sadden the mind. Fears, doubts, and sorrows, will more or less annoy them. Faith struggles with these invaders, and would fain penetrate the gloom which they create. But for wise and good purposes, the hard conflict is allowed its time of continuance. Yet, in most of these cases, deliverance is at last granted; and, ere the tried spirit quits its frail abode, hope, if not joy, cheers the closing moment. We may still confidently point to the departing believer, and say, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

After all the exceptions, then, that may be made, on either side of the question,—after all the favourable circumstances that may be placed on the side of the wicked, and the unfavourable on that of the Christian, in the hour of dissolution, the respective cases are essentially different. And O how momentous the difference! In the case of the Christian, it is safety—a certainty of eternal life and

glory. In that of the unbeliever, or the wicked, what is it but the solemn preparation for putting the sentence of everlasting destruction into execution? To the Christian, however clouded his last moments may be, through timidity or temptation, death has no *penal* sting. Christ, in his behalf, and in his stead, received that sting into his own person. The language of the prophet is explicit on this point. Speaking in the name of all the redeemed, he exclaims, "He was wounded for *our* transgressions; he was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed!" How full of meaning are these words!—how soul-satisfying, how heart-strengthening to the dying believer! Well may he sustain the ravages of disease, and all the pains of dissolution, when, through faith, there is supplied to his soul the balm of assurances so gracious, of consolations so sweet as these words convey! Behold in them the source whence martyrs drew their support under cruel tortures, and at the burning stake: and from the same source every true believer is entitled to draw, not *support* only, but even *triumph*, when death comes to unclothe him of his earthly vestments.

What a desirable portion is that of the Christian! Who, in contemplating the critical, the solemn hour of death, does not earnestly wish that it may be his? Who is not ready to pray, "Let *me* die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?"

But how is this desire to be fulfilled? Clearly *by living the life* of the righteous—by coming to God betimes; and that in the way of his own appointment—through "repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." The privilege of a Christian's death is to be looked for, as the issue of a Christian life. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Mark, in the passage just quoted, the particular class of character to which the Apostle ascribes the privilege of acquittal before God. Do we belong to it? It is material; it is essential to a well-grounded confidence, to ascertain that we do. The class is specifically and exclusively of those who are found in Christ Jesus, "walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,"—living agreeably to the law and rule of the Spirit, resisting carnal and worldly propensities, and cherishing a tendency of mind to spiritual and heavenly things. They who walk after the Spirit make the glory of God, the spiritual interests of their fellow-men, and their own growth in grace, the main concern of their lives. They are those who not only confess Christ with the mouth, and associate with his people, but who have, in some measure at least, imbibed the Spirit of Christ, feeling happy in submitting their minds

and hearts to the influences of the Spirit, and aiming at a perfect conformity to the example he has left. If, then, we would ascertain our true position, —if we would know ourselves aright, let us look into the perfect Law of God—the Law of his Gospel, and, attentively regarding it as our spiritual mirror —a mirror faithfully reflecting every feature of our moral nature, let us examine and dress ourselves thereby, till one blemish after another be removed, and every distortion be adjusted,—till every trace of "the old man, with his deeds," be effaced, and there come out upon us "the new man, which, after the image of God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." But to this great effect there is need of persevering watchfulness and prayer. Our own deceitfulness demands vigilance; our natural helplessness calls to supplication. We must come again and again to the study of the perfect model. In this we must labour, as though all were suspended on our personal effort: for this we must cry unto God for the spirit of his grace, as though he were, as he truly is, the indispensable, the only efficient agent in the conversion and sanctification of the soul of man. Thus let us do, and success is our's.

LECTURE II.

DIGNITIES.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."—Rom. viii. 16, 17.

"And hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father."—Rev. i. 6.

In the preceding Lecture we reviewed that class of Privileges which may be characterized as Deliverances, when the sinner, through faith in Christ, is accepted and justified before God. The state of things with him is then changed; he becomes a believer, and enters on the possession of great and manifold blessings. In other words, he is invested with privileges of an order high and rich beyond conception. It is impossible for us to embrace the whole, or even to come near to a just estimate of their number; yet it may be profitable to make a selection of them for devout meditation and study. With this view, we now proceed to consider the *more direct* Privileges of Believers, as including their Dignities, their Rights and Liberties, their Consolations, their Heavenly Inheritance, and their Securities.

I. Their DIGNITIES.

Entering on this class of Christian Privileges, we are forcibly reminded of that gracious declaration, "*My* thoughts are not *your* thoughts; neither are *your* ways *my* ways, saith the Lord: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are *my* ways higher than *your* ways, and *my* thoughts than *your* thoughts." A guilty criminal—a rebel against his Prince—one who has been righteously condemned, and on whom has passed the sentence of death, will think himself sufficiently happy, if a free pardon be obtained, and his life given him. He expects not to be admitted to the embrace of his sovereign, and elevated to rank and honour. This is not the manner of man. Enough, in such a case, if the criminal escape condign punishment, and be set at large. But herein has the goodness of God infinite pre-eminence. His thoughts and ways towards his creatures are like himself, and worthy of his revealed character. His works of grace especially are, in degree and excellence, far beyond all created power to emulate. They are of a nature that could not even be anticipated by beings like ourselves, nor can they be fully appreciated when declared. In recovering sinners, the grace of God stops not at remission of sins. It is not content with staying the punitive hand of justice, it gives them also the hand of friendship and favour; it not only frees them from the rags of filth and wretchedness, but arrays them in the best robe, and adorns them with badges

of distinction; it does not satisfy itself with merely delivering from going down to the pit, but rejoices over them, to raise them to dignities, honours, and near relationship to God. If we be asked to what honours, to what relationship to God believers are raised; we answer, on scriptural authority, that they are made—the SONS OF GOD—HEIRS OF GOD, and JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST—KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD. We say, then, that believers, or Christians, are made—

1. The SONS OF GOD.

To this dignity they are raised by an act of *adoption;* and this term is not simply a theological, it is a scriptural one. But there are two kinds of adoption: the one, *general*, relating to the visible Church, or to that indefinite number of mankind acknowledged of God as his worshipping people; the other, *special*, relating only to a sinner's acceptance with God, and his introduction to the privileges of his family through Christ. The first allusion we meet with in Scripture to the former, or general kind of adoption, is the announcement at the birth of Enos, Adam's grandson, when we are told, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord," or, as it may be better rendered, "to call themselves *by the name of the Lord.*" From this announcement, we learn that, in the midst of the general apostacy, the knowledge and worship of the true God was retained in the family of Seth. Among the people of his line existed the Church;

and they are, no doubt, the same class of men who are afterwards spoken of under the title of the "sons of God." We recognise this mode of adoption also in the covenant which God made with Abraham and his posterity, saying, "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God." Hence Moses, in his instructions to the people at large, thus addresses them, "Ye are the children of the Lord your God;" and this honourable distinction is repeatedly ascribed to them under the Old Testament dispensation. But general adoption, such as this, was *outward* and *indefinite* in its character, indicating only the members of a *visible* Church, and including, as it must obviously do, the evil and the good, the *nominal* and the *real* children of God. The prophet, remonstrating with the very people of this general adoption, charges them with gross idolatry, and exclaims, "Are ye not children of transgression, a seed of evil doers?" And the Apostle, while speaking of the distinguished privileges of the Israelites, acknowledges at the same time that "they are not all Israel who are of Israel;"—neither are they all Christians who are called Christians.

If, then, it be demanded here, as Paul, on a similar topic, supposes it may, "What advantage hath this general adoption, or what profit have we in belonging to the *visible* Church?" we answer, with him, "Much every way," chiefly because unto you, in such circumstances, are committed the oracles of

God. You have access to the fountain of all truth; you have the advantage of instruction in the mind of the Spirit by his own oracles, "which are able, through faith in Jesus Christ, to make you wise to salvation;" you are privileged with the means of grace; you have an open sanctuary to which you can repair, with the administration of the word and ordinances, to all the provisions of which you are made welcome. Assuredly, the desirableness, the preciousness of advantages such as these will not be questioned, if you duly consider what your condition would be were you destitute of them.

The adoption, however, with which we are at present concerned is *special*, which, being purely *spiritual*, has a reference only to such as are called of God, "according to his own purpose and grace given to them in Christ, before the world began."

In civil life, adoption is the act of a person selecting and taking some one from a family not his own; placing him in his own family, not as a *guest*, but as a *son;* giving him his own name, and investing him with the rights and privileges of his own children. This practice is common among men, and sufficiently intelligible. It becomes, therefore, an appropriate illustration of a similar transaction in the Divine economy. There is, however, in the principle of this act, a material difference from that which characterizes the Divine procedure. Adoption among men is generally determined by some amiable properties, or suitable qualifications, found, or supposed to be found, in the adopted, which

have recommended him to his patron. God's adoption is an act of his free, unmerited grace, towards those who have nothing attractive or recommendatory in them. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." Adoptions with men may, and often do, originate from selfish motives. The party adopting anticipates, and seeks to secure thereby, some advantage to himself. On the part of God, the act is that of gratuitous, yet sovereign favour towards the adopted. "He hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." This truth must be self-evident, from the immeasurable disparity between the parties in the concern. The one is the Creator, infinite and almighty; the other the creature, "whose foundation is in the dust." There can be no accession to absolute perfection. The Supreme Being can derive no advantage, no benefit from any other being, since all are his creatures, dependent upon him for their very existence. "Can a man be profitable unto God? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?"

But, in another, and important, point of view, this gracious transaction differs from, and infinitely excels, the most magnificent act of adoption among men. Such an act, on the part of the most distin-

guished mortal, is altogether *external.* It is ratified by deeds and instruments to be seen and handled, referring to impartations and transferences of temporalities only. But the adopted of God undergoes a real and transcendantly important transition. It is one emphatically *internal* and *spiritual.* It is a matter of the soul in all its departments, which thus passes over in its affections, its will, its taste, from the family of the alien to the household of God—from the bondage of Satan to the liberty of the children of God; it is the Holy Spirit's requickening of the soul from spiritual death to the life of God, through faith in Christ Jesus.

We would further remark on this act of the great God, that it is an exhibition of his faithfulness in fulfilling his stipulations in the covenant of grace. His calling and adopting sinners of mankind into his family, to make them his sons and daughters, follows most certainly from his free, sovereign, and gracious determination from all eternity; but he gave them to his Son to be redeemed by his blood, and, in covenant with him, engaged, on his working out their redemption, to call them effectually by his Spirit, and grant them the adoption of sons. In so doing he fulfils his engagement. We see, therefore, in contemplating this Divine procedure, the result of a beautiful arrangement: we see the efficacy of the Son's righteousness and atonement, in redeeming his people; the energy of the grace of the Spirit, in regenerating them; and

the faithfulness of the Father, in receiving them into his paternal embrace, and investing them with the rights and privileges of his children. Henceforth, in the spirit of adoption, they approach him with the cry of "Abba, Father!" and He owns the relation; He responds to the cry; He even publishes the gracious transaction to the universe. He makes it known to the celestial inhabitants; for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,"—to the world; for "by their fruits are they known;" and "all men shall know that they are the disciples of Christ, when they love one another as brethren." Satan also, their former master, is forced to know it; for "the strong man has been bound, and despoiled of his goods;" and the mighty enemy felt to his cost, when the Lord contended with him, that "the prey was taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered." And, what is more, this happy transformation, this dignifying change, is for encouraging and cheering purposes, made known to themselves; for, on being adopted, they become partakers of the Divine nature, and "the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirits that they are the children of God."

How honourable and how blessed is such a state as this!

1. As to the *Honour* connected with adoption, what shall we say? The theme is too great, too rich, for adequate description. We can but touch it. And, first, think, my fellow-Christian, how high

you rank in the order of intelligent beings, when you become a child of God! But, perhaps, we are asked, Is not every man, every woman, a child of God? May we not say with the prophet, "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" True; we acknowledge that man, in his original condition, springing from the hand of his Creator, was styled "the son of God." But he sinned—he apostatized,* and was, in a spiritual sense, disowned, and lost his high dignity. He leagued himself with the arch-enemy, Satan, and became a child of transgression and of wrath. The only relation then in which he could stand to God was that of an offensive rebel; and, without repentance and reconciliation, the object of his just, his eternal, indignation. With him fell all his posterity. Then, think of the degradation and defilement into which your nature was sunk; how the image of the heavenly Father was effaced from the soul, and that of Satan, through the enmity of the heart, was impressed upon it: so that, under these circumstances, all mankind incurred the odious charge made by the lip of truth against the unbelieving Jews, "Ye are of your father, the devil; and his lusts ye will do." Again, think of the wonderful change wrought upon you by the Spirit of grace—of the horrible pit and the miry clay out of which you are brought, and of the new and lofty relation to which you are now exalted. Adopted into the family of God, your whole moral nature has passed through an elevating

renovation. Recovered by a scheme of wisdom, power, and grace, which attracts the inquiring admiration of the purest and highest of created intelligences, you are raised into high and intimate favour; your name is entered in the Lamb's book of life; and you are made a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God. What wonders attend a change like this! From what a depth of wretchedness does it rescue,—to what an exaltation does it elevate the soul thus redeemed and honoured! The apostle John, privileged as he had been with close and special converse with the Saviour himself, speaks of it as a subject vastly too sublime for description. He can only express the fulness of his heart, as he thinks upon it, in the language of grateful admiration. "Behold!" he says, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" As if he had said, "What love is here! who can describe it?—a love which, considering the objects on whom it is conferred, involves a condescension that none but God could manifest. It presents to us the unutterable wonder of the Almighty, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are done in heaven, stooping to an alliance with earth-born, feeble creatures, such as we are! and, what is more, of a holy and just God, not only receiving us to peace and pardon, but forming with us, unworthy as we are, a relation so close, so endearing as that of a Father with his children!" What lowly con-

descension in God! what high distinction for man! Yet here there is no loss of dignity in the Mighty condescending to the mean—no compromise of honour in the Lord allying himself with his dependant—no taint suffered by the Holy One in affiliating to himself unholy man. No: he displays and magnifies his attributes of mercy and goodness; he glorifies his grace, when he thus "raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory."

2. The *Blessedness* of this adoption is also beyond our power duly to estimate. If an individual of obscure and mean origin be singled out by his sovereign, taken into his household, made to sit at the royal table, and to share in common with the princes of the blood, he will be considered by his fellow-subjects singularly *happy*. But this favourite, this object of human partiality, is in a poor and abject state compared with that of an adopted child of God. It may be gratifying to vanity, it may be profitable to the interests of the present life, to be allied with the rich and the great—to enjoy their smile, their patronage, and the largesses of their bounty; but what is the amount of this world's favour—what the profit of the highest princely possessions, seeing that, at the most, we can have but a life's interest in them? If put in competition with the parental favour of God, they are as nothing. Alas! we need only appeal to the testimony

of history to prove the utter worthlessness of a favourite's place at the court of an earthly prince. Do we not see that its general issue is disappointment, disgrace, wretchedness, remorse? Yes; and that most commonly after a feverish, short-lived enjoyment. But suppose the most flattering distinctions should be secured for the possessor to the close of his life,—suppose the highest adulation of his fellow-men, and the richest prizes to be gained amongst them, should continue his unimpaired, uninterrupted, portion until death—what then follows? Ah! if this were all, if he sought not, nor desired any *better* portion, you may read his awful and final destiny in the parable of the rich man, who in his lifetime received his good things; but when he died, "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Alas! for the infatuation of vain, earthly, God-forgetting mortals, who spend their lives in magnificent dreaming, and awake to realities so tremendous! Oh! should these pages meet the eye of any one still a slave to his lusts and the fascinations of the world, we tell him that our prayer for him is, "Holy Spirit, dispel thou the sad infatuation, and awaken the slumberer, that he may open his eyes to his perilous condition, and flee, in timely alarm, from the wrath to come!"

What lot, then, is so much to be coveted as that of God's children? Truly, with all the infirmities attendant on humanity, with all the vicissitudes and vexations from which none are exempt, they are of

all Adam's race the highest honoured and the happiest; for they, and they only, are privileged to rise superior to all the ills of life, assured, from the best authority, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It derives, indeed, its transcendent value from the consideration that it is liable to no disappointment, that it can never be abrogated. It has the stamp of eternity upon it; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Regeneration and adoption can never be undone. As the rational spirit, at its first creation, commences a being for eternity; so, at its second creation, when made anew in Christ Jesus, it receives a new life, which is fed, and nourished, and sustained to an immortal duration. The apostle Peter, speaking on this subject, tells the believing brethren, "Ye are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible; by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Stamped with this deathless character, how worthy of the most ardent longing, the most agonizing pursuit of an immortal soul, is the privilege of sonship with God! Were it pursued even at the forfeiture and loss of every other possession, of every other distinction, it would be cheaply won; for it is "the one thing needful," including, and bringing with it, the most important blessings which our nature is capable of enjoying.

But this happy relation between God and his people involves in it many other peculiar and inter-

esting considerations; some of which we must briefly notice. Among men the party adopting necessarily binds himself, in behalf of the adopted, to certain duties and services, not otherwise existing between them. So also the Father of heavenly grace enters into engagements for the well-being of his adopted children, to which they had previously no right. He affords them provision and instruction; he exercises them with needful discipline, and ensures them his protection.

1. He finds them *Provision.* He furnishes them with every needful supply. He indeed sustains every creature which his hand has formed. "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry; he satisfieth the desire of every living thing." But, in the provisions made for his adopted children, the Father's *heart*, as well as *hand*, is to be seen. Whatever he bestows on them, while it is promptly afforded, is no less wisely and kindly adjusted to their respective cases. He consults their best interests, not their fondest desires. The provisions, therefore, which he makes for them are just so many blessings. While others snatch at the bounties of his providence with carnal selfishness, and a brute-unconsciousness of the bestowing hand, they receive them as the pledges of their Father's love, and sit down to the enjoyment of them as at the domestic table. In this character they are taught to regard them; and when so regarded, a relish is given them infinitely higher than the men

of the world know, in all their affluence. "Better is little, with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith."

He ensures to his people a *permanent* provision. He gives not as the world gives: its bounties are often hard to be won, given grudgingly; and then, when most wanted, capriciously withdrawn. *He* giveth not only liberally, and without upbraiding, but with a faithfulness and a constancy claiming the unwavering reliance of his children. His word assures them that, neither in the kingdom of his providence, nor in that of his grace, shall anything that is good for them be lacking. "Their bread shall be given them; and their water shall be sure." To one and all of them has he promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "The Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest." Their wants, indeed, may be many and great, but He, that suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without his notice, will not fail, in the best way, to supply all *their* wants. Their circumstances in life may wear a gloomy aspect; reverses of the severest kind may be their lot; disappointments and losses may come upon them in rapid succession, reducing them to a state of destitution and poverty, from which lover and friend turn away as from a loathsome disease,—but what then? "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." His stores of supply are ever full; and were it good for his children who thus suffer, He that blessed the

latter end of Job more than his beginning, with thousands of sheep, and camels, and oxen, would do the same for them. But they are visited with heavy trials and deep depressions, because they are undoubtedly the very provisions by which their spiritual health and his glory are best promoted. In every case their provision, both in kind and degree, is regulated by infinite wisdom blended with paternal goodness. On this they may ever rely. It may not be palatable to flesh and blood, but it is wholesome to their better nature. A wise and good parent will not pamper his child's taste at the risk of his health; neither will God present his children with a sweeter cup, or a daintier provision, for the pleasure of the life that now is, to the sacrifice of that which is to come. He gives, indeed, to some of his children a goodly portion of this world's possessions; but he thereby increases the responsibilities of their position. He makes them his stewards and almoners: he exacts of them a practical demonstration of liberality and benevolence, on the larger scale; and employs them more especially in the promotion of his cause upon earth, and the relief of the poor among his people. On the other hand, he allots to others a coarser and scantier fare, that they may edify the Church, and glorify him, by the exhibition of the lovely graces of patience, humility, and unmurmuring acquiescence in the Divine will.

2. He affords them *Instruction;* and this he does

by various instrumentality.—By his *Providence.* Some are so dull that they learn nothing from the events daily passing before them; others are so engrossed with the pleasures, or the cares of a fleeting life, that "they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands." But the Spirit of God opens and explains to his own children the book of Providence. Paying a devout attention to the doings of their Father, in the world, in the Church, and towards themselves, they are taught to read his meaning in them, and the use he would have them make of all they are called to witness, as well as of what they are made to experience, whether it be prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, pleasure or pain.

The ways of Providence are by no means an easy study. The men of the world, with all their sagacity, misunderstand them, go counter to them; and are frequently left to "eat the fruit of their own way, and to be filled with their own devices." How appalling, for instance, are the acts of desperation to which we often see them driven, by an obstinately false reading of vicissitudes in their life! The children of God themselves, from their native waywardness, do not unfrequently indulge vain interpretations of their Father's dealings with them, till experience makes them wiser. When the candle of God shone upon the head of Job, and wealth and honour gave him distinction, he hastily reckoned on a perpetuity of happiness, and

said, "I shall die in my nest; and I shall multiply my days as the sand." The case of David discovers the same aptitude to premature security. Hear his confession: "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord! by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong!—thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." But God instructs his children by these vicissitudes in the frailty and evanescence of every earthly good, and the necessity of relying exclusively on himself for that peace which satisfieth the soul,—a peace which the world cannot destroy, because it flows from the covenant-love of their Father and their God.

He instructs them by his *Word.* This is the great Lesson-Book of his household. They are all led to study therein his doctrines, his precepts, his counsels, his promises. These are all opened up and explained to them by his Spirit: for "the Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God." There they learn the wondrous works of their Father,—how his wisdom, his power, his grace, and his justice, unite in their salvation,—how, when withering under the curse and bondage of the law, they were quickened, and emancipated, and adopted, through faith in Christ, into the family of God, and invested with the privileges of his children. In his Word he teaches them the value of the ordinances of his house; his gracious design in their appointment; and the spirit and manner in which they are to be observed. In fine, his

Word is their only authoritative manual of faith and practice; for "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

To these sources of instruction is added the appointment of *Pastors* and *Teachers*, to administer his ordinances, and to "feed them with knowledge and understanding;" who, taking their directions from the Sacred Word, labour among them, by exhortation, exposition, warning, and invitation, to "edify the body of Christ, and, speaking the truth in love," to stimulate every member to "grow up into him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ."

3. He *disciplines* his children. This is a department of parental duty requiring, above all others, a large share of wisdom—a wisdom manifested in exercising the graces of prudence, patience, and firmness. Seldom do we find this wisdom exemplified in the conduct of earthly parents. Either, through foolish fondness, blind to the faults of their children; or, wholly reckless of their moral well-being, they neglect all discipline; or, capricious, irritable, passionate, they punish, rather to relieve their own feelings, than to restrain the follies, or correct the vices of the child. But in this, as in every other point of contrast, how truly may we say, "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways!" He loves his children,—

no love like *his!* but he loves them too well to allow them to work their own ruin, for want of the rod. On this subject the Apostle speaks forcibly, though concisely, and puts the corrective discipline of God in a clear and perspicuous light, both as to its nature and its design. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they, verily for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby." This view of the Divine chastisement needs no elucidation from us. We would only observe that it impressively teaches us our inherent depravity. We are prone of ourselves to go astray; else would there be no chastisement from the hand of our heavenly Father: for "He doth not afflict *willingly*, nor grieve the children of men." Nothing, therefore, becomes us more, nothing is more salutary for us, than humility, self-distrust, watchfulness, and prayer; and to these we are disciplined by the chastisements we endure. We are also

taught by the Apostle in what light the afflictions of God's children are to be viewed. They are expressive of his paternal love and care. They are blessings from his hand. It is one of their special privileges to be brought under his chastisement: its end being to reclaim them, when they wander from him; to make sin *odious* to them, by making it *bitter;* and, by mortifying their untoward appetites, and breaking off their unholy attachments to the world, to make them partakers of his holiness.

4. He *protects* his children. What so helpless as young children? Exposed to numerous and various evils, what must they do, in infancy, without continual nursing, but perish? What, in childhood and youth, without the protection of experience, but run riot, and fall into ruin? Hence the early and the late watching of the nurse, the anxious guardianship of the parent, and all the obligations of the older towards the younger, in our several relations. On the protection of Divine Providence we are all, parent and child, equally dependent. We are exposed to dangers seen and unseen, over which we have no control, against which we cannot provide. "None can keep alive his own soul." It is God alone, who, knowing the end from the beginning, interposes his protection, and preserves whom he will. Now the children of his grace are his peculiar heritage. On them he fixes the parental

eye,—an eye ever watchful; for "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." There must be perfect safety where omnipotence keeps guard. Happy is the Church! Her "place of defence shall be the munition of rocks." It can never be surprised—never broken through. Her confidence is in his own word, "The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

But children are naturally wayward, and prone to err. Forgetful of their own insufficiency, and heedless of consequences, they often break loose from parental restraint, and fall into mischief. So is it with the Christian. He is secured against ultimate ruin, but he occasionally goes astray. His native proneness to folly is not altogether eradicated; and though he never entirely escapes from the eye, or the hand of his God, he is sometimes permitted to stumble and fall, for wise and good ends. On such occasions he is more forcibly reminded of his own weakness, and of the true source of all his sufficiency. Having felt the evil and the bitterness of forsaking the Lord his God, and the loss his soul has sustained by grieving the Holy Spirit, with deeper self-abasement, and keener longing after the wonted smiles of his Father's counte-

nance, will he return, and weep before him, till he obtain the tokens of pardoning and accepting love. Oh! sweet is the hour of the wanderer's return to his heavenly Father! sweet the hour of fresh application to the blood of atonement, and the renewed pledges of his acceptance in the Beloved! His heart is indeed more sensibly wrung with anguish, and more fully do the tears of repentance flow at the thought of his ungrateful rebellion; but the embrace of his forgiving Father is felt more close, more warm, than ever; while the soul-winning, reassuring accents pour, as it were, upon his delighted ear, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Though a child of God, therefore, may unhappily fall under temptation, and do that which is unworthy of his high calling, yet the enemy has no just ground for exultation. He has an answer for the cruel taunt, and can say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." On the other hand, he is not warranted, by the forgiving goodness of God, to presume and to venture on forbidden ground. No; the child of God has no indulgences granted him to sin. The will of his heavenly Father is explicit, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." He nowhere reads that he is at liberty to relax his vigi-

lance at any moment. He finds the command of his Lord absolute, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." He learns that nothing is more binding upon him, as he pursues his course, than self-scrutiny and caution, "lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil;" and so far from discovering any passage in the Oracles of God admitting the slightest degree of deviation from the right way, or the view of any transgression as little in the sight of God, he reads, "Abstain from all *appearance* of evil;" and that the very foundation of his system has, so to speak, this inscription—"Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

But what do I say? It is not in the nature of an adopted son or daughter of God wantonly and willingly to offend him. The spirit of adoption is a spirit of obedience, of love, of holy zeal. It is in harmony with the Divine mind, and can have no relish for that which God himself has so feelingly deprecated, saying, "O do not that abominable thing that I hate!" Its happy and proper existence is in that very harmony. When a child of God has, through some powerful temptation, been surprised into sin, it is because, for the time, he has forgotten where his strength lay, and suffered that spirit to languish in him. But soon he is brought to feel the violence he has committed against his renewed nature, and the dishonour done to his God; he "goes out, and weeps bitterly." His offence is

not trivial in his eyes. He pleads no palliation before God; he is deeply sensible of its wounding and polluting nature, and, longing for reconciliation, repairs afresh to the blood of sprinkling that cleanses from all sin. Thus is his soul restored. Hear the promise of God respecting his children, on such occasions: "They shall come with weeping; and with supplications will I lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn."

II. Believers are made HEIRS OF GOD, and JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST.

The Apostle, speaking of the spirit by which the people of God are led, characterizes it as a free and ennobling spirit: not like that which prevailed under the old, servile dispensation; it is the spirit of adoption, through which they approach God, and, with filial boldness, call upon him as their Father: then, in the tone of one announcing a happy and delightful consequence, he exclaims, "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ!" As the adopted among men are not only made free of all the privileges of the house and family, but are also entitled to an inheritance of the honours and estates of the adopting party, so God makes his adopted children *his* HEIRS, entitling them to every blessing of the covenant of grace. This investiture into rights and privileges so great

is indeed an integral part of the act of adoption. Without this it would be incomplete. Adoption includes heirship; and hence we read, "If a son, then an heir of God, through Christ." The son is his father's heir by natural right; and every son whom God adopts becomes his heir by virtue of his oneness with Christ. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

This Divine heirship ensures to its happy possessor the love and favour of God the Father—the sympathy and intercession of his incarnate Son —and the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. No created mind can comprehend, far less can any tongue express, the value of an inheritance like this. But short as we must necessarily fall of adequate conceptions of such a theme, we may fix, and ought frequently to fix, our inquiring and self-appropriating meditation upon it. We ought frequently to set it before us, not as a topic for the imagination only, though it might well gratify, as it would certainly sanctify, its most excursive efforts, but as a blessed reality, for the mind and heart to seize and feast upon, till the whole soul, glowing with grateful love, and tending more and more upwards, feels herself emancipated from earth and earthly things, and becomes conscious of greater and greater hungering and thirsting after an entire meetness for its possession. Such elevating meditations the children of God are privileged to entertain. Mean-

while, let us briefly notice the subject in the three aspects of it to which we have just adverted.

1. Believers, as the children of God, inherit his *Love and Favour*. They may, indeed, be said to be interested in *all* the attributes of their heavenly Father; but as God is emphatically, and, if we may so say, comprehensively, characterized as LOVE, all the other attributes may be considered as so many modifications of that one. In this view of the case, God is himself the portion of his children. No human parent, whatever the yearnings of his natural affection may be, can give to his sons and daughters as God gives to his. We may rise up early; we may sit up late; we may eat the bread of toils and sorrows for the benefit of our children; to them we may devote all our cares and all our energies, and seem as though we held our entire selves as their property,—but what will all this avail?—we are ourselves but frail mortal beings, and all the fruits of our labour are precarious: they may prove insufficient; they are liable to decay, and must ultimately perish. Such is the character of every human good. But God, in the manifestations of *his* love and favour, is a portion at all times abundant—at all times available; and he that possesses such a portion is enriched for time and for eternity. What can ever be wanting to an heir of the Lord of all? "All things are your's," says the Apostle to the believing Corinthians, "all things are your's, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world,

or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's." Is this a true inventory of the believer's inheritance? Can he look round on all things, and call them his own? Yes; in right of his relationship to the Universal Proprietor, he knows them to be his. A child of God, through Christ Jesus, he is taught to look on all things as made subservient to his interests. They are his in the best sense; for all things are under the control of his Father, who has put them all under the feet of Christ, to whom he belongs; and through Christ, as Head over all things to the Church, the believer has a claim upon them all. The love of God in Christ Jesus confers them, and that gratuitously, on the Christian. He cannot, therefore, contemplate his inheritance in this light, without feeling his heart glow with love to God in return; nor can he but rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. It was this pious and joyous feeling that prompted the Psalmist to exclaim, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!" A lofty and holy aspiration this! The child of God, in this elevation of soul, is not conscious of a wish after any other enjoyment than God, but pants after more and more of him, seeking "to be filled with all the fulness of God." Whatever there is in heaven of rich—of lovely—of glorious—of blissful, he finds in God, who is his all-sufficient Portion. This in truth is his heaven. And as for earth, when he comes down to its con-

cerns, there is nothing within its utmost range to afford him any satisfaction, but as connected with his God. All the beauty, all the fitness of the creatures, he sees and admires in the Creator whom his soul loves. Every earthly good allotted him is relished only as coming from the source of all good. And not only so: he glories also in the tribulations he endures on earth, knowing that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope;" by all which he glorifies God, and delights himself in the sublime anticipation of dwelling in glory, honour, and immortality with him! Inheriting, therefore, the love and favour of God, he enjoys him in all things, and all things in him.

2. The adopted child of God inherits the *Sympathy and Intercession of God's incarnate Son.* The great doctrine which, most of all, gives character to the Christian religion is the mediation of Christ. To him, the Second Person in the adorable Trinity, the office of Daysman, or Mediator between God and man, was, from all eternity, so assigned as at once to be the appointment of the Father, and the voluntary undertaking of the Son. But this mysterious transaction involved conditions of peculiarly deep humiliation and condescension, which it behoved him to embrace. He embraced them all; and his believing people rejoice to know that, having entered into his glory, he has not ceased, nor will ever cease, to care for *them.* He who taught,

and healed, and suffered, at Jerusalem, now enthroned in heaven, continues "the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He has taken with him that nature in which he became their Substitute, and accomplished their redemption. He wears in glory the same benignant countenance towards them, and has the same tender, sympathizing heart as ever. He that prayed for all those that should believe in him, through the word of his apostles, intercedes for them still, now that he is "set down at the right hand of the throne of God." If while they were yet sinners he died for them, much more now that they are called by his grace will he recognise them as *his*, and interest himself in their behalf, till they are gathered into his kingdom. Exalted as he is above all principality, power, might, and dominion, and receiving the homage of all, he still turns the eye of a faithful and kind Guardian towards his people on earth. He has their welfare at heart. He acknowledges them still as his friends—his brethren; nor deems it derogatory to his transcendent honours to bear the office of their Representative in heaven. This is no doubtful or questionable assertion, for "we have not," says the Apostle, "an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; and is able to succour them that are tempted." And, from this cheering consideration, the Apostle encourages the Christian to come boldly to the throne of grace, "that he may obtain

mercy, and find grace to help, in time of need." What an invaluable privilege for a child of God do these words involve! If he *may* so come, and with such a view, then is the throne of grace *ever* open to him, for *his* is *ever* a time of need. Like a helpless child, he is constantly dependant on the support of his parent. He cannot stand, but as God holds him up; he cannot walk aright, but as God leads him.

There are, however, peculiar seasons, in the case of children, when the protective and salutary care of a parent is more urgently called for, than at others. Such are the seasons of thoughtless wandering, of unforeseen and accidental evils, and of violent assault; and there is, last of all, the hour of death. So is it in the household of God. But in the Christian's deepest depressions, when clouds and darkness seem to wrap around him, he is enabled to look up to his gracious Intercessor; and he that hears the sighing, and feels the sorrows of the weakest of his people, sends him the needful relief. His complaints and supplications are turned into praise, and the language of his revived heart seems to chide his own despondency. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God!" Blessed is the man who has such resources!

3. But we have also observed that the child of

God inherits *the gracious Operations* of the Holy Spirit. Adopted into the family of God, the Christian is invited, as a child at home, to a near approach to his Father, that he may enjoy a familiarity and intercourse with him, to which others are strangers. This intercourse is maintained by the agency of the Spirit. It was by *his* agency that he was at first regenerated, and brought into union with Christ. By his operations he was created anew: it is his prerogative still to communicate with the soul, and to exert upon it those influences which tend to enlighten, to guide, to sanctify, and, finally, to mature it for glory. The child of God, on this side heaven, is subject to weaknesses and wants, to sins and sorrows. From these he is not promised an absolute exemption, till the last enemy be overcome. On his way to his final inheritance, he has to pass through many conflicts; and he must endure, as a good soldier, until they are all accomplished. But he inherits all needful aid, all appropriate supplies. He has, in the promised influences of the Spirit, all that his case, however varied, may require. In his farewell discourse to his disciples, the Saviour assured them he would send them the Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, to guide them into all truth, and show them the things that belonged to him. The child of God is privileged to draw, by the prayer of faith, upon this promise. There are seasons when his mind is beclouded with doubts and fears, and his path seems shrouded in

darkness; and so long as, through infirmity of the flesh, or forgetfulness of his privilege, he neglects to urge the promise, in that darkness he continues to walk, and goes mourning without the sun. But the Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of adoption, expels the spirit of bondage; and the Christian is, at length, enabled to "remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." He thinks of his happier experience in months past—in the days "when the candle of the Lord shone upon his head," and when by his light he walked through darkness; and, relying on the promise of the Spirit to them that ask him, he earnestly seeks and obtains its fulfilment. Then rises light on his obscurity, and his darkness becomes as the noon-day. His heart is moved to gladness, by the cheering presence of this Divine Agent, and he sings, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."

Is the Christian met with strong temptations to sin? Has he duties of peculiar difficulty and untried danger to fulfil? He feels and owns his own insufficiency. He reckons on no human resources, but turns to the Strong for strength. "My sufficiency," he says, "is of God. I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." According to his faith, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of counsel and might, comes upon him; his heart is emboldened, and his hands are made strong for whatever work he has to do. He is never, indeed, in any position where he is independent of the Holy

Spirit's influences, nor where the benefit of those influences may not be enjoyed. All his religion is traceable to the Spirit. What are repentance, humility, faith, love, zeal, but fruits of the Spirit? And are not all the duties of teaching, warning, and suffering, and the works of mercy, charity, and Christian benevolence, if performed aright, performed in the Spirit of God? Yes; by the Holy Spirit the Christian is led, is purified, is guarded, is comforted. He lives in the Spirit; he walks in the Spirit.

We have yet to add that believers are made *Joint-heirs with Christ.* This is the head of the climax to which the Apostle rises, in describing the honour and dignity of their spiritual rank. The language is expressive of a mind warming and swelling with the subject, as it contemplates it. It is as if he had said, "How wonderfully great the honour and dignity conferred upon us! If we are the children of God, then we have an *inheritance,*—we are *heirs*—heirs of God, whom we are permitted to approach, and cry, Abba, Father! We are even *joint-heirs* with Christ, the eternal Son, the Lord of all, who condescends to call us his brethren." But it is material to observe what the Apostle includes in this co-heirship with Christ. If we reckon on this high dignity, we must be prepared for all that it involves. It is expressly stipulated, that if we are to share in his bright inheritance, we must previously share in his humiliation and suffering. The

charter runs thus: We are joint-heirs with Christ, *if so be* that we *suffer* with him. This is an important consideration. There is a cost to be counted here. If we are heirs of God, and claim to be joint-heirs with Christ, we enter upon engagements of self-denial and obedience to the Gospel. We consent to take up our cross and follow him, through evil report, as well as good report; not shrinking from, but cheerfully bearing his reproach; and should persecution in its bitterest forms arise, to rejoice if we are counted worthy to suffer shame, and even death, for his name. Such is the inheritance which, as joint-heirs with Christ, we must, if called thereto, be ready to embrace. He himself has laid down the terms on which a genuine heirship with him must be held. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

The heirs we are now speaking of enjoy the high privilege of sharing with their Lord in the communion and fellowship of their heavenly Father, and in the sweet consciousness of his approbation. They are indulged with the freedom of filial access, to spread before him the thoughts and desires of their hearts, and to offer him their thanksgivings for the tokens of his paternal love. They, too, like their Lord, have a joy set before them, for which they willingly endure privation, suffering, and shame, "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Fin-

isher of their faith." And, finally, to them belongs the animating hope, that when they have finished their warfare here, they shall enter into the joys, the triumphs, the glories, and the honours, of their exalted Lord,—a hope founded on his own promise, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

III. Believers are made KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD. Of all ranks and conditions among men, the royal and the sacerdotal have ever been held the most elevated and honourable. For the power, influence, and splendour which their titles are thought to possess, they are eagerly sought; and the testimony of history is only too abundant as to what sacrifices, both of character and peace, are made, and crimes perpetrated, by men of ambitious spirits, to climb their heights. Men of the world can aim no higher. To be saluted "king," or venerated as a "priest" of the highest order, is, in their estimation, to gain the very acmé of human bliss and grandeur. To them every other grade looks up. Multitudes seem to make themselves happy in anticipating and fulfilling their every wish; and their mandate none dare to dispute, for "where the word of a king is there is power." But ardently and eagerly as these and other high titles are aspired to and grasped at, by them who covet the honour that cometh from man only, we need not say how, in every case, these

honours fall far short of the fond expectations they had raised;—how frequently they have proved the bitterest of disappointments, bringing upon their successful candidates desolation, instead of prosperity; and instead of a blessing, a curse! So far, indeed, as man's true enjoyment is concerned, few conditions in life have been found less favourable to it than that of wearing an earthly crown. This humbling fact, respecting the proudest earthly eminence, is confirmed by the experience of all ages. There is, however, a kingly dignity *incorruptible;* there is a royal priesthood, holy in character, and permanent in duration,—but these are *spiritual.* They are dignities peculiar to the children of God, the joint-heirs of Jesus Christ.

In reference to this privileged class of people, the appellation of kings and priests is figurative; the dignity itself is real. Their titles are borrowed from offices recognised and honoured among men, but which receive an infinitely truer and more elevated meaning when employed to mark the spiritual dignity of the heirs of God. They are entitled *Kings*, as having, through the grace of God, conquered, and obtained the ascendancy over sin, Satan, and the world. To these enemies of God and man they once did willing service. To them were they subject, while unregenerated, in common with all mankind; but the Spirit of God made the truths of the Gospel tell upon their hearts and consciences. They were awakened, quickened, delivered from

thraldom, and brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Then, how great the revolution in their case! The despotism under which they were before enslaved is destroyed. Sin has no longer the dominion over them. They entered into conflict with their former lords, and have conquered them; they have driven them from their ascendancy; and over those that once reigned, *they* reign. True, the wisdom and prowess by which the spiritual conflict is sustained, and the victory won, are not their's. They had no resources of their own for such a warfare. The resources belong to, and are derived from, the Lord their Righteousness. It is by his support they are able to withstand, in the evil day; and by his strong arm do they overcome and subdue their every foe. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." The corruptions still lurking within them may, and do frequently, strive, as dethroned tyrants are wont to do, to regain their lost dominion. But the Holy Spirit operates upon their hearts and minds to make sin, in every shape and degree of it, hateful to them, —hence conflicts that still arise—the better law of the mind warring against the law of the flesh. They conquer, but give all the glory to their Lord. "I can do all things," says Paul, "through Christ who strengtheneth me." Such, however, is the grace and condescension of the Saviour, that he speaks of the conquests which his people obtain as if they were their own, and promises them accord-

ingly the reward of victors. It is in him they are conquerors, yea, *more* than conquerors; and he makes them kings. He makes them so in the best sense of the title; for, as he is Lord and Head over all, he has made all things subservient to them who are his members. "All things," he tells them, "are your's;" and to consummate all, promises them the unspeakable honour of sharing in his throne.

What are the kings of the earth,—what all the pomp and splendour with which they dazzle the eyes of their fellow-mortals, in comparison with this? Their names, perhaps, shall be handed down, in the long genealogical line, through successive ages of time; but the names of those spiritual kings are written in heaven, even in the Lamb's Book of Life, where they will be found when ages shall cease to be reckoned. The crown of an earthly monarch is of corruptible matter; that in reserve for the believer is a crown of righteousness incorruptible. And what are the dominions of kings among men, with all their array of servants and subjects, but shifting, precarious, unsatisfactory possessions? Those whom the Son of God makes spiritual kings have their kingdoms in heaven, where they shall reign with him for ever: and even *now* they have for their attendants to wait upon them the angels themselves; for "are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs?"

Again, these adopted children are also made

Priests unto God. The *office* of Priest, in our holy religion, belongs exclusively and incommunicably to Christ. We acknowledge none other. But, in a figurative sense, all true believers stand in the character of priests unto God, to present unto him the offerings of prayer, of thanksgiving, and of obedience. The title is common to them all —to the preacher of the Gospel, and to his pious hearers alike. There is no separate order of priests among Christians, no one being more capable than another of sustaining such a distinction. "This honour" (in a scriptural sense) "have *all* the saints." Their spiritual oneness with Christ procures this, with their every other dignity. As in him they are made kings, having obtained dominion over their enemies, so in him they are made priests, being, in body, soul, and spirit, made holy, and consecrated to his service. They are, as the apostle Peter expresses it, "a chosen generation, a holy and a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." In thus characterizing the people of God, the Apostle puts three things into prominent view,—the *sanctity and dignity* of their function, as priests; the *offerings* they are appointed to present; and the *acceptableness* of their services before God.

1. *Dignity and Sanctity* are united in this spiritual priesthood. Believers, being made partakers of a new life, and sons and heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, are of the seed-royal, and share in the

honours of their Divine Head. Hence we find the sublime doxology to Christ, in the beginning of John's Apocalypse, mingling a grateful expression of this holy and dignified participation. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and *hath made us kings and priests unto his* God and Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!"

A priesthood necessarily conveys the idea of *Sanctity.* That under the law was pronounced holy to the Lord. Various observances were prescribed, and various things prohibited, to signify its special holiness. The sacerdotal unctions and vestments, the washings and purifications, were all intended to impress upon priests and people the necessity of holiness in the services and worship of God. But to mark the holiness of *this* spiritual priesthood, no external signs are required.—It is that of the heart and life.—It is the sanctification of a man's entire nature, effected by "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit."—It is purity of thought, word, and deed;—the tendency of the affections towards God, and conformity to his will. It disposes him who is the subject of it to believe in God, to confide and rejoice in his promises, to cherish communion with him, to labour in his service, and, in a word, to strive after a growing resemblance to the Divine perfections. Such is the holiness of what may be called the *Gospel Priesthood.* We do not, however, mean to

say that the members of this priesthood are immaculate—pure from all sin. Such a state they do not attain, while in the body,—it is the privilege of heaven. In the sense of absolute perfection, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." But the work accomplished in all true believers is an *effectual*, if not a *perfect* work; it has made them new, though not *finished*, characters. If they are not wholly free from sin, it has no longer the dominion over them. Perfection is their aim: the process is now begun, which will be perfected in glory, when they "will be like Christ; for they will see him as he is."

2. Believers, as a priesthood, *offer up sacrifices*. A priest supposes a sacrifice which he professes to offer. He is ordained chiefly for that purpose. What then are the analogous sacrifices and services of the believer under the Gospel? "The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change in the law." He is not required to come before the Lord with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old, or with rams; nor to make offerings of corn, of wine, or of oil. No; the Gospel-priesthood is wholly spiritual, and spiritual must be the offerings made. Sincerity of heart, indeed, and devotedness of spirit were required of worshippers under the old dispensation, without which their most costly offerings were an abomination in the sight of God; but, freed, as we are, from their expensive and cumbersome services, we are emphatically and spe-

cially bound to worship "in spirit and in truth,"—to present our offerings in the incense of faith and love, and holy desire. And yet this simple, unencumbered service is just that against which the corrupt nature of man mostly revolts. Bodily exercise and toil, with pecuniary sacrifices, would many willingly present, as all their religion,—spirituality of heart and mind they will not render. It is a qualification for which the unregenerate man has no relish. Spiritual service consists of supreme love to God, harmony with his will, and a disposition to obedience, than which nothing is more the object of his dislike and avoidance; for the carnal mind is enmity against God. But the true believer in Christ, like a priest of God's own ordination, offers up a holy and spiritual sacrifice. He presents himself, acknowledging himself a debtor, an unworthy debtor, to the free grace of God, for salvation and the hope of a blessed immortality; he feels that he is not his own, but *his* who bought him, at the cost of his own blood, and thankfully gives his whole self "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is his rational service." But what is implied in such a sacrifice? Surely, nothing less than holding sacred to God the whole inner and outward man,—the understanding, with all its faculties, to be increased and strengthened in the acquisition and maintenance of Divine truth,—the heart, with all its affections, to embrace that truth, to centre in God, and to go out in ardent desires after unceasing

tokens of his love and conformity to his image,—the will, with a determined, constant, persevering purpose to melt into the will of God, bringing the whole moral man into an acquiescent disposition to be, or to do, whatsoever he appears to have willed. And in offering the outer man, the eyes are to seek out and obtain objects and occasions to serve God and a fellow-creature,—the ears, to listen to the oracles of truth, and the tale of human woe,—the tongue, to utter prayer and praise to God, and to speak good of his name,—the hands, to labour in works of piety and mercy,—and the feet, to go on errands of love, and to run to and fro, that knowledge may be increased. These are the sacrifices of the Christian priest. But as its main and indispensable characteristic is spirituality, they may be all comprehended in the surrender of the HEART to God. Where this is freely and fully given, it carries with it all the rest, and becomes, as the Apostle describes it, "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And this reminds us that this spiritual service meets—

3. With *acceptance.* On frequent occasions of sacrifice by some of the ancient patriarchs, we perceive that their acceptance, on the part of Heaven, was visibly notified by the descent of fire upon the victims. But the Christian's sacrifices being *spiritual,* the tokens of their acceptance are *spiritually* given. They are presented simply and exclusively in the name, and through the incense, of his

Great High Priest. Through him alone he expects to find acceptance with the Father. Deeply sensible that, neither in himself, nor in the offerings he presents, can any excellence or favourable circumstance be found to attract the Divine complacency, he trusts wholly in the merits and the grace of him who represents him in heaven. But here he fails not; and his acceptance is made known to him in the sweet experience he enjoys of "the love of God shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him,"—in the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity he is serving God,—in the increasing tendency of his affections towards God and Divine things,—and in the delight he takes in promoting the glory of his Redeemer, and "making manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place." In such tokens as these he cannot be deceived. They are impressions made upon his heart and mind by the Holy Spirit himself, and by which he bears witness with the spirit of the believer that he is a child of God.

Truly the Dignities of which we have been speaking are of surpassing grandeur and blessedness! Yet, such is the distortion of mind, and such the grossness of heart prevalent among our fallen race, that the multitude neither appreciate nor desire them. Immersed in the things of time and sense, they are callous to the things of faith and holy anticipation. In vain do we warn them of the delusions they are following, or urge them

to open their eyes to spiritual realities, or ply them with remonstrances on the perdition they are incurring, contrasted with the bliss and glory they are rejecting. "They are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely." Alas! for souls so altogether reckless of their immortal interests—so wholly engaged in the pursuit of airy phantoms, as to have neither time nor relish for seeking a title to the kingdom of heaven, preferring abject slavery under sin and Satan to the glorious liberty of the children of God; and rejecting a freely-offered salvation, with glory, honour, and immortality; choosing rather to brave the dreadful alternative of a fiery indignation, and the blackness of darkness for ever!—Spirit of the living God! this is not as thou wouldst have it! Thou hast no pleasure in looking on the work of self-destruction. O still strive with obstinate sinners! What is impossible with man is possible with thee. Yet bear upon them with thy word and grace. "Is not thy word like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" O draw them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love, that they may break away from the bondage of sin, and lay hold of eternal life!

Christian! it is well with thee. Thou hast made a wise and happy choice. Thou art now a child of God; but remember it is by the grace of God thou art what thou art. This, and not thy own merit, has made thee to differ from another.

"Thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear." Thou art exhorted to be sober, to be vigilant, because the adversary is still seeking to devour. Let Jesus be ever thy Pattern, as well as thy Boast; and carry this motto impressed upon thy heart, through the whole course of thy life, "*I am expected to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith I am called.*" As an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ, thou art required to cultivate holiness of heart and life. Thy spiritual birth is of the highest order. Live as becomes the son of a king, in expectation of a kingdom. Maintain a royal bearing. Degrade not thyself with conformity to the maxims and practices of a sinful world. Let thy conversation be marked by a high-toned principle of piety and devotedness to Christ, and his cause upon earth. Be mindful of the vows that are upon thee; nor be content with a negative righteousness, but see that "Holiness to the Lord" be inscribed on all that is thine,—not simply "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," and abstaining from offences of the tongue and conduct, but regulating thy thoughts, thy affections, thy purposes, thy desires, by the maxims and the spirit of the Gospel, commending them to others, and "speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing!"

LECTURE III.

RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness (liberty) to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart."—HEB. x. 19.

OF our civil and social privileges, or our rights and liberties, as members of society, we are, at all times, sufficiently tenacious. Whether they be our's by inheritance, gift, or purchase, we cling to them according to the worth at which we estimate them, and resent any attempt to deprive us of them. We guard them with sensitive jealousy; we boldly assert them; and if they be threatened, we feel annoyed, and prepare to defend them. If they be invaded, the invasion is instantly resisted. We enlist in this service every power we possess, mental as well as physical. Poetry and oratory are called in to aid, on such occasions, by stirring up the spirits, and nerving the hand, for determined and successful defence. To all this we are, no doubt, the more readily excited, as, in these cases, our pride is affronted as well as our interests endan-

gered. Hence the zeal and earnestness we display in maintaining the rights and liberties belonging to us as men and citizens.

But, however valuable these may be, and however worthy of our watchful tenacity, I have now to invite attention to Rights and Liberties of infinitely greater import and value,—those that belong to the people of God. They are derived from an authority undeniably supreme, and held on a tenure not liable to casualties. They are not earthly, but spiritual. They are the possession of believers; but not their's in their own right, nor by their own purchase. They are the gifts of God—the unbought, unmerited gifts of free, uncontrollable sovereignty. They are indeed *purchased* possessions; they are liberties bought *for*, not *by*, them who possess them. They are freely bestowed of God on man, but purchased by the blood of his Son, in man's nature, to be so bestowed. Believers hold them precious, and esteem it their best interest and their highest honour, with earnest and frequent application, to avail themselves of them.

Now these liberties are all of them chartered for this people in the Covenant of Grace, and revealed to them by the Holy Spirit in his word. There they find them illuminating and adorning numerous pages of the sacred oracles, ministering both to their fulness of joy, and to the growth and vigour of their spiritual life. Too abundant to be reviewed at large, we can only specify some of them. The

Rights and Liberties, then, which believers may be said to enjoy are—

I. LIBERTY TO RECEIVE AND APPROPRIATE TO THEMSELVES THE PROMISES OF GOD.

II. TO REST IN THE PATERNAL LOVE OF GOD.

III. TO HOLD COMMUNION WITH GOD.

IV. TO SPEAK AND ACT IN THE NAME OF GOD.

We have accordingly to remark that believers are privileged with liberty—

I. TO RECEIVE AND APPROPRIATE TO THEMSELVES THE PROMISES OF GOD.

Promises among men are proverbially uncertain, and frequently prove the most deceitful of all things. This is but expressing the general experience. So commonly are human promises met with mistrust, that we often find our very children look upon us with a doubting countenance, when we have promised them some future good. It is too true that in this bad world many false and hollow promises are made. There are classes of people who, from worldly, selfish, sordid motives, will lie, and flatter, and falsely promise, to compass their own ends. They employ deception as means of success, reckless at once of the disappointment and distress they occasion to their credulous victims, and of the sin of a "false tongue" before God. Against putting our trust in such characters, especially to the exclusion of the confidence we ought to repose in God, we are forcibly warned in his own word: "Thus

saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm; and whose heart departeth from the Lord!"

But, indeed, there can be nothing in the promises of frail humanity to guarantee an event to come. Possessors of only the present moment, we know not what the next may be charged with. We are all of us, at all times, and in every condition of life, whether in wealth or in poverty, in health or in sickness, dependant upon contingencies, over which we have no control; and no one of us ought to pass his word to another but *conditionally*, in the spirit of the Apostle's admonition, not saying we shall do so and so, but, "If the Lord will, we shall live," and do this or that. This uncertainty attaches to human promises of the best character. We may promise with the greatest sincerity, with perfect honesty of purpose, and not be permitted to fulfil it. The means may escape beyond our reach; the favourable opportunity may never arrive: death may intervene, and blast our fairest hopes. The Psalmist was, no doubt, impressed with this view of human uncertainty, when he gave the wise and wholesome caution, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts (purposes) perish."

It is not so with the promises of God. They come from One whose power and will are absolute, and whose inviolable faithfulness ensures a timely

and an abundant fulfilment. But what is more, the Divine promises are all of them made in wisdom and goodness. He knows both what to promise, and when and how to bring it to pass. "He is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" God is also liberal in his promises. They are as numerous and varied as are the cases and wants of his people. Whatever may be their lot, whatever may occur to agitate or try their spirits, God has furnished them in his word with a promise to re-assure and support them. Let us briefly consider their character.

The apostle Peter, alluding to them, very happily, yet concisely, designates them "exceeding great and precious promises." And well may they be so described; for they are "great and precious" in the estimation of believers, because—

1. *Their heavenly Father is their Author.* It is he who has spoken them. On the enunciation of any sentiment, or counsel, or promise, or threatening, we naturally look to the authority that puts it forth, and give that degree of attention which we deem the authority entitled to claim. If we think meanly of him that speaks, we attach no importance to what he says. "The poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard." Even that which is wise and just, proceeding from the lips of him who is held in contempt, loses its dignity, and

excites disgust; for "Excellent speech becometh not a fool." But if rank, power, intelligence, and each of these attributes of the highest order, should unite to characterize the speaker, let him counsel, or threaten, or promise, the influence is felt, and we own at once his claim to our reverence and attention. The promises we are now speaking of have the highest authority,—they emanate from above. In this respect they cannot be mistaken; for they carry with them, so to speak, the very impress of the Divinity. They partake of "the exceeding greatness of his power." Who can arrogate the tone of God's promises? Who can promise like him? His promises, while they speak grace, mercy, and peace to them whose right and liberty it is to embrace them, bear in them the tokens of power, majesty, and truth that belong to no created beings whatever. Yes; it is the prerogative of him who framed the worlds by his word, to speak in the strong language of the promises in the sacred pages. Truly, as our Watts has beautifully expressed it,—

> "His very word of grace is strong,
> As that which built the skies;
> The voice that rolls the stars along
> Speaks all the promises!"

2. They are "exceeding great and precious," because *they are the bearers of exceeding great and precious Benefits* to those to whom they are addressed. In this, undoubtedly, their intrinsic value consists. But the promises are not all of equal value: some

relate to objects of but secondary importance; others, to the first, the highest interests of rational and immortal beings. They may, therefore, be arranged under two classes,—those of a *subordinate* character, as relating only to *temporal* concerns; and those of the highest importance, relating to spiritual and eternal things. The promises of the former class, having an aspect only to the present life, are clearly not those to which the Apostle refers. God, indeed, makes no promises unworthy of his wisdom and goodness to make; but he has condescended to present them in the varieties that suit the wants and weaknesses of his people. The blessings he has stipulated in the covenant of grace are the grand and all-important articles that belong to their peace, for time and for eternity; but he is graciously pleased also to promise, that "unto them shall be added all things" needful to their temporal good. The followers of Christ are not, however, promised to be made the largest sharers of this world's wealth, or to be placed in stations of eminence and superiority over their fellow-men. These distinctions, so far from being needful, tend only to make "the heart haughty, and the eyes lofty," and to corrupt the principles of the children of God. They foster pride, worldly ambition, and the lust of power, passions altogether incompatible with the humility, the heavenly-mindedness, and love of God by which they are characterized. Their heavenly Father is too wise and too good to promise posses-

sions that might prove a snare to their souls, and endanger their everlasting inheritance. He strongly prohibits the desire of such things, but, at the same time, liberally promises to supply all their natural wants. "Bread," he says, "shall be given them, and their water shall be sure." "O fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." The Saviour himself, on this topic, urges his disciples to implicit confidence in their heavenly Father, assuring them that he who feeds the ravens, and clothes the flowers of the field, will much more feed and clothe them.

Every child of God has also the promise of *providential Interposition and Care* in his behalf. These are the ample terms in which it runs: "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. There shall no evil befall thee; neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling: for he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

The promises, however, of the *second* class are those of which the Apostle speaks. These are truly worthy of the high epithets which he employs to distinguish them, conveying, as they do, to the Christian, the child of God, *exceeding great and precious blessings.* What, for instance, can be so great, so important, so highly precious to him, frail and erring as he is, while in the body, as the grace that pardons his offences? The promise brings him

assurance of this. The apostle John, speaking to God's children, tells them, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" and this is the direct language of the promise, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The Christian, appropriating to himself such expressions of goodness and love, feels his heart enlarged; and he goes on his way with renewed alacrity. But it is in the believer's nature to long for advanced attainments in the spiritual life. He is aware that in regeneration he is sanctified but in part, and that progress must be made. It is his duty and his privilege to grow in grace; to "forget the things that are behind, and reach forward to those that are before;" to press towards a higher and a higher mark; in fine, to be holy, even as God is holy. To no degree of this is he sufficient in himself. Yet his Bible tells him that the path of "the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But feeling his utter inability to verify that illustration in his own character, he is often forced to lament the little advance he makes, and even to doubt whether he be in the right path at all. He writes bitter things against himself, and his soul is cast down and disquieted within him. On such occasions, when the Spirit takes the things of Christ, and shows them vividly to his mind, how exceeding great and precious do his promises appear! how refreshing to

recollect his words, "My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness!" and "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint!" So exceeding great and precious are the Father's promises to supply all his need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus, that he not only finds them his most reviving and delightful recollections, but he *feeds* on them: they are the stay and nourishment of his spiritual life; they minister to his growth in every grace; they constrain his obedience; they stimulate his love; they invigorate his faith; they brighten his hope; in fine, to use the words of our Apostle, "By them he is made a partaker of the Divine nature."

Nor has God been sparing and scanty in the enunciations of his gracious engagements. Time would fail us simply to enumerate them in all their beautiful variety; and no created mind is able to comprehend, nor any tongue to tell, the richness of the blessings to which they relate. But to all of these, numerous, great, and precious as they are, the child of God is made welcome. He is invited to embrace them, to trust them implicitly. He is exhorted to cultivate that "perfect love which casteth out fear," and disposes the soul to lay hold on the truth and faithfulness of God in the promises of his word. This confidence is the appropriation of the promises, and is well pleasing in the sight of God,—it does honour

to his truth. As the natural affection of a father is honoured by the return of filial confidence, so is God represented in his word as glorified by the abundant faith and unquestioning confidence of his people. Thus Abraham is said to have been "strong in faith, giving glory to God," because he "was fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform."

Christian, the promises are thine. Dost thou claim them, and embrace them, and glory in them? or are there any of them which thou canst not appropriate? Thy Father in heaven is not a partial father; what he promises to one, he promises to all his children. But if aught hinder thee, and prevent the enjoyment of the privilege, the hinderance is not in him, but in thyself. "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" No; with thee—in thy own bosom—the restriction, if any, must be found. It may be thou art conscious of some turning aside from the right way—of having grieved the Holy Spirit, by neglecting or going counter to his monitory suggestions. Some temptation may have surprised thee; thy faith may have failed; thy love become cold; thy zeal languid; and the world has been suffered to gain upon thee. If thou art involved in any such case as this, the consequence will doubtless be darkness, timidity, and distrust of mind, so that thou art scared from the great and precious promises, as infinitely too good, too rich, for a backslider like thee to claim. Thou hast

guilt upon thy conscience, and therefore thou hast fear. But abide not in this state. Let not this fear prevail. Even for thee, in this case, there are invitations, there are promises. Arise, seize upon them, and plead them with God. Hear what he says, for he waits for thy return: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thy iniquity. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." And, lest a sense of thy unworthiness should so bow thee down, and confound thee, that thou knowest not what to say before him, he condescends to dictate the very language of thy prayer. "Take with you words," he says, "and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." And then he adds, "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." Be encouraged thus to return, depending throughout on Christ, the propitiation for thy sins. The promises will then again be sweet to thy taste, and thy soul will be restored to the exercise of a right and liberty to appropriate and feast upon them, as the bounteous provision of thy Father and thy God.

II. Believers enjoy the right and liberty of RESTING IN THE PATERNAL LOVE OF GOD. The soul of man, in his present imperfect state, is unquiet, dissatisfied, and ill at ease. It is like a being detained

out of its proper element. It is ever in search of suitable nourishment, but lights not upon it; for it thrives not, but seems as if it must starve on what it partakes of in the things around it. It is constantly looking after and expecting satisfaction, but nothing in this world can afford it. In fine, it craves, it longs for the fulness of that happiness for which it is created, and for the fruition of which it inherits a capacity. But so long as its search is confined to the things of time and sense, it longs and craves in vain. What the Scripture asserts respecting wisdom may be declared of the proper rest of the human soul. "Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not in me." Still the soul, while involved in nature's darkness and degeneracy, though disappointed in every quarter, returns again and again to the search, crying out, "Who will show us any good?" and still destined to hear the same answer, to meet with the same repulse. Within a region so low and limited there is nothing to fill its desires—no stable good on which it can repose. What then? Is this the inevitable fate of the soul of man? Is it to be doomed, like "the troubled sea, which cannot rest," to incessant agitation? to be going over and over the round of human pursuits, with the same invariable results—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity?" No; the matter is in no such desperate case. The troubled sea cannot indeed rest of itself; nor is it

in the power of man to smooth its surface. But this perpetual searching of the soul—this inextinguishable longing after rest, with dissatisfaction even in the abundance of worldly good, indicates its capacity for a higher, a richer, an ampler enjoyment; and for that capacity provision is made. It is in the conscious enjoyment of the love, the paternal love of God in Christ Jesus, that the believer's soul finds a satisfying repose. When he is brought, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, through repentance and faith, to Jesus Christ, as the propitiation for his sins, and is enabled to receive him as his only hope, and salvation, and peace, he feels his reconciliation with God effected, and rests in his love. Here his extramundane desires begin to receive that kind of satisfaction which suits their nature. Like the mariner, who has been long tossed to and fro with storms and tempests, but is at length brought to his desired haven, he finds in the bosom of his heavenly Father a hiding-place from danger and from fear—a rest from fruitless labours—a "strong habitation whereunto he may continually resort." How happy, how blessed a position is this!—to rest in the love of God the Father, of God the Son, and of God the Holy Spirit! feeling assured, in the possession of that love, of his full acceptance in the Beloved, and of his perfect security against the attempts of his arch-accuser to mar his joys! But there are some particular points of view, in which it becomes us to contemplate this love.

1. The love of God towards the believer is a *costly* love. As in all excellences, so in love, the Lord Jesus has the pre-eminence. None has ever loved, none *can* ever love like him. The love of Christ passeth knowledge. The amount of a fellow-creature's love is very often soon told. How short-lived its fervour! how reluctant its self-denial! how inactive its labours! how sparing its favours! But the love of Christ to his ransomed people has heights and depths, and lengths and breadths, which cannot be measured. That a man should so love his friend as to lay down his life for him is the greatest extent of human love; but Christ died for the ungodly, that Divine love might be manifested to them. The greatest prince on earth descending to die for his meanest subject, would fall infinitely short of the condescension of the Lord of Glory consenting to die for a sinful mortal. O it is beyond the tongue to tell, or the mind to conceive, what it cost Divine love to save sinners! We can only speak of it in language that shows it to be unspeakable. God the Father so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; the Son so loved us, that he washed us from our sins in his own blood; and the Holy Spirit so loved us, that he quickened us, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, and brought us to God. It is in such love as this the Christian, the child of God, is invited to rest.

2. The love of God is a *disinterested* love. Herein also it stands out in infinite pre-eminence. How

little among us, even the best of us, do we find of purely disinterested attachment! A selfishness will too generally be detected at the bottom of our most charitable deeds. Our love is seldom or never drawn out to any object where we meet with nothing that pleases us. We take credit for benevolence, where, if our motives were analysed, it might be found that we were actuated not a little by the prevalence of self-consequence, cupidity, or the desire of relieving our own minds from painful feelings. Too frequently, in whatsoever things are most lovely among us, we have some self-interest to serve. But think of the love of God, the self-existent, independent, Creator and Supporter of all things, to us the creatures of his forming, who, so far from being profitable to him, had rebelled against him—so far from being pleasing in his sight, had become offensive by disobedience, and odious by the pollution of apostacy! —Yet he loved mankind! What but purely disinterested love could have originated the plan and work of our redemption? It was to men, while yet sinners, that God gave his best, his unspeakable gift to save, to adopt, to bless, and to glorify them! It was clothed in purely disinterested love that Christ came so readily, so cheerfully, to the scene of our rebellion, and took our nature into union with his own, that he might therein be "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities!" In this wonderful love his ransomed people find repose.

3. This love is a *tenderly compassionate* love. The tenderness of Divine love is repeatedly alluded to in the sacred oracles, and presented to us in beautifully pathetic and melting illustrations. Nature animate and inanimate, and the softest affections of the human heart in our most interesting relations, are brought up, and appealed to, in order to represent this character of the love of God. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench? He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass. He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom; and shall gently lead those that are with young." One prophet, speaking of his regard for his people's sufferings, says, "In all their afflictions, he is afflicted;" and another, to cheer and encourage them, tells them that, such is the tenderness of his care for them, that "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." To assure them of the deep place they hold in his heart, he condescends to be depicted in every form of endearment. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;" and "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." And in how winning a manner does the Apostle, even when magnifying the character of Christ as a great High Priest, tell us, that notwithstanding his transcendent greatness, he so far identifies himself with us, that "he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities!" Surely, in love and

tenderness thus warmly and feelingly expressed, on the part of God towards his people, they may confide securely, and rest without fear.

4. It is a greatly *enriching* love. To the love and friendship of a fellow-creature, whose character is influential and active, we may have been greatly indebted. He may have relieved us in difficulties; he may have helped us to patronage and wealth. He has thus far a claim to our gratitude. But how incalculable our debt to God's paternal love! "In his favour is life; and his loving-kindness is better than life." The Christian, realizing this love, may well say to his soul, "What is the value of the most exalted of all human attachments to that of him 'who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's?'" And when he thinks on the value of atoning, cleansing, and reconciling love, how must his heart exult in its inexpressible amount! for "Ye know," says the Apostle to the believers at Corinth, "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich." O justly may such love as this prompt the grateful cry, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!"

5. This is an *everlasting* love. The friendships of the world are proverbially short-lived. It may be that they warmly and loudly profess their sincerity and faithfulness for a season; but in time of trouble, when most needed, "they deal deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks, they pass away." Human friendship, however, may be sincere; human love may be cordial; the desire to do good, to alleviate distress, to diffuse happiness, may glow with veritable warmth in the bosom of a man,—but his resources are limited; he cannot command events, and his purposes are defeated. Besides, he is mortal: "His days pass away; his purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of his heart." But the true Christian has a Friend that loveth at all times, and for ever. "The love of Christ," as the late pious Dr. Waugh has beautifully expressed it, "the love of Christ is deep as the grave in which he lay, high as the heaven to which he ascended, ancient as eternity, and lasting as the interests of the immortal soul!" Listen to the accents of that Friend: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed; but my lovingkindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee!" Nothing is wanting here to a secure and lasting foundation for the peace and rest of a child of God.

III. The believer enjoys THE LIBERTY OF HOLDING COMMUNION WITH GOD. This privilege the

first man, so long as he stood in the unimpaired image of God, who created him, happily enjoyed. He then held high and close converse with his Maker, who had endowed him with a mind capable of reciprocating and corresponding with himself. What an exalted, what an interesting relation for man to hold! Jehovah condescended to come down, and make his creature his companion! He walked, and communed, with him! He made him the object of his paternal love and favour, communicating to him all Divine and natural knowledge; and fitting him for filling correctly the relations in which he stood, and for a perfect enjoyment of existence. The human affections, in return, centred in the bountiful Creator. To man, in his sinless state, all was full of God. The thoughts of his heart, the words of his mouth, and the doing of his hands, were all in harmony with the mind and will of his Father in heaven, whose manifestations of wisdom, goodness, and love were his daily feast. But man being in honour did not abide,—he disobeyed, sinned, and fell. That holy, happy, intimate communion with God was lost; he became unfit for it. Guilt occupied his conscience, and filled his heart with jealousy and dread. Aversion took the place of love; and estrangement, of intimacy and communion.

Great, incalculably great, was the loss sustained by man, when he lost communion with God. And what renders it the more deplorable, it was a loss

altogether out of his own power, and that of any other creature for him, ever to recover. But the mercy and the wisdom of God, who willed not the death of the sinner, accomplished that which otherwise must have remained for ever impossible. Resolving upon a remedy, God set forth his own Son, his eternal Son, in the room, and clothed in the nature of man, to atone for sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness. Through faith in his atonement, the sinner receives pardon, acceptance, and adoption. He is made a new creature; the Spirit is given to sanctify him; and he is restored to communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Wonderful privilege! On the part of God, how condescending! on the part of the believer admitted to its enjoyment, how blissful! It is a privilege fraught with many and substantial benefits. Let us notice some of them.

1. Communion with God is an *enlightening* privilege. That communion, or converse one with another, is attended with a direct and marked influence on the sentiments and character of individuals is universally acknowledged. So entirely do we take this for granted, that we at once estimate a man by his associates. It is a law of our constitution, that companionship will exert a power, more or less active, according to its intimacy and time of continuance, in the formation of character. Hence the maxim of Solomon, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of

fools shall be destroyed." How important, then, to our well-being in the life that now is, and that which is to come, is the right choice of our bosom companions! But our choice is prompted by our affections. If we love the wise and good, we shall seek their society; and if, in maintaining a close fellowship with them, we make accessions of knowledge and wisdom, O what advances in spiritual light and truth may we not hope to gain in communion with GOD! "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." He is "the Father of lights" —the Fountain of all light, physical and moral. We speak now of moral or spiritual light—of that knowledge, wisdom, and truth which are moral attributes of God, belonging to him in all their infinitude. All light possessed by intelligent creatures emanates from God. Whatever portion of wisdom and true knowledge is found in angels or men is communicated by Him, from whom every good gift, and every perfect gift, descends. The believer, therefore, in converse with God, through the medium of his word and ordinances, derives from the light of his countenance brighter views of his interest in Divine love. By this near approach, he sees more clearly, and appropriates with greater vividness, the attractive and adorable perfections of his heavenly Father, and contemplates with livelier feelings "the depth of the riches both of his wisdom and knowledge," especially in the wonders of man's redemption. In the exercise of

this privilege, he pours out his heart before God; and receives gracious communications of light respecting the way he is going, and the purposes of God's dealings with him; and his prospects brighten before him! In fine, in this happy exercise, the Spirit communicates liberally of the things of Christ to the believer, and lets an illumination into his heart, "giving him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

2. It is a *purifying* privilege. As in communion with the Fountain of light the believer is blessed with increase of light in spiritual things, so, in cultivating the same exercise with the centre and source of moral purity, he receives more and more of purifying grace. There is a reciprocating action in communion; and while the soul goes out in holy desires after God, it partakes, in return, of his nature, and grows in purity. He cannot maintain such holy intercourse without enjoying this great benefit. And it is highly needful for him; for he is sensible that he "has not as yet attained, nor is already perfect." He has not yet arrived at a perfect meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. He feels, that as many Canaanites remained in the Holy Land long after the Israelites had settled in it, so there are yet principles, passions, and propensities in his nature that war against the better law of his mind: but, cherishing this sacred converse, his hope of obtaining their suppression and eradication, and of reaching a

more complete resemblance to his Lord, is enlarged; and he is stimulated to "purify himself, even as he is pure;" he becomes more heavenly-minded, and has a keener relish for whatsoever things are pure, and holy, and harmonious with the mind and will of his God.

3. This communion is an *ennobling* privilege. What can present to the imagination a grander style of man than the short, but striking, history of Enoch, that he WALKED WITH GOD? The expression is, no doubt, figurative; but it is strongly expressive of frequent and intimate communion with his Maker. He was one who, in the midst of a God-forgetting generation, preferred, sought, and enjoyed the love of God—as his chief joy esteemed it his highest honour, as well as his greatest happiness, to be the recipient of his gracious communications, and enabled to make to him the returns of grateful praise, and an obedient life. When a great earthly potentate raises a deserving servant to the peerage, he gives him a distinction and nobility among his fellow-mortals, which last for a while. But what is that to the elevation of a Christian admitted to communion with God? He holds the patent of a far higher nobility than any that the breath of kings can make. He is a younger brother in the royal family of Heaven! He enjoys his nobility in manifestations of paternal endearment, on the part of God, though he had no claim to any such favour, and was altogether unworthy

of it. But grace has elevated him into sonship, by adoption into the Royal House; and God, even his God, communes with him, as with one of his heirs—an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ! "If a man love me," said his Lord, "he will keep my words: and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Now, the Christian is not thus honoured simply to cheer and delight his own heart; it is not intended solely for *his* distinction. Its influence, in ennobling him, consists chiefly in enlarging his gifts and advancing his sanctification, that he may "show forth the praises of him who hath called him out of darkness into his marvellous light." He is thus ennobled, that he may shine as a light in a dark place, to the glory of his Father in heaven. The Spirit of Christ is given him, to live in him, and inspire him with his own views and aims, and with magnanimity to carry them out. From such holy and elevating communion it was that the primitive disciples caught that boldness, which set them above the fear of man, so that, in the face of magisterial prohibition, they "ceased not daily, in the temple, and in every house, to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Blessed and precious converse! It was the enjoyment of this also that braced the souls of the martyrs, at all periods, for the endurance of the bitterest persecution, and taught them to brave every form of cruelty and

death! And now, from such considerations, we are led to remark that believers enjoy—

IV. Liberty to speak and act in the name of God.

To delineate the character, to portray the movements, to explain the language, to unfold the mind and meaning, the desires and purposes, of any individual of our fellow-men, and to do all this correctly—to represent the man precisely as he is, and as he thinks and purposes, would obviously require much and intimate acquaintance with him. If it were our business to lay open, as it were, his very heart before our hearers, or our readers, and to show them with what affections it was filled, with what cares it was exercised, and on what it was chiefly set, it is clear that nothing but an habitual, close, and unreserved communion with him would entitle us to attempt such a task; so can no one be considered as duly accredited to declare, for the instruction of others, the character, the ways, the mind, and the will of God, who has not a close and experimental acquaintance with him. He that knows not God is not qualified to reveal him: he cannot make him known to others. What a man has not received, he cannot impart. In the way he has not himself trod, he cannot guide. For such a character to attempt such a service is to be guilty of a presumption mischievous in the extreme, and highly offensive in the sight of God. "Unto the

wicked God saith, What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" To the Christian, then, and to the Christian only, belongs the privilege of speaking in the name of God. He only, among men, has the right and liberty of making known to his fellow-men the character of him with whom he communes, and with whom he walks—of expounding and enforcing on the consciences of all within his reach the word and will of God; for he only can truly say, in a spiritual sense, "That which we have seen, and heard, and felt, declare we unto you." And this privilege belongs to *all* Christ's people. It is, indeed, no less the duty, than the privilege, of every genuine Christian, of whatever grade or standing in society; it is for *him*, however small his sphere of action, who has himself come to God through Jesus Christ, to show the way to them who have not yet found it—for *him*, who is habitually conversant with the mind of God in his word, to explain and commend it to those who know it not.

True, we have *official* agents for this great and good work. Pious and devoted men, withdrawing from secular engagements, have given themselves as *Ministers and Pastors* to the sacred employment of calling sinners to Christ, and feeding his Church. Their's is a high and holy office, an appointment of Christ himself, the only Head of the Church. They speak in his name, under his commission; and they

have not only a right and liberty so to do, but they are officially bound to spend and be spent in that special service. Ministers and Pastors of the description I now refer to readily acknowledge this obligation. Like the Apostle, whose labours were so eminently abundant, they will each of them say, with deep consciousness of its truth, "A dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me; and woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel." Not that they esteem it an irksome yoke, but value it supremely, and glory in it, as their highest honour and noblest privilege. They deem themselves, indeed, immeasurably unworthy of the high distinction to which they are raised, in being sent to preach among their fellow-men the unsearchable riches of Christ,—but their delight is in the work. To fulfil their ministry—to testify the grace of God, is a service dearer to them than their own lives. Their chosen and cherished motto is the same Apostle's testimony, "To me to live is Christ." But though to this order of men belongs especially the privilege of speaking in the name of God, yet it is not *exclusively* their's. "This honour have *all* his saints." And few things deserve to be more forcibly impressed upon the minds of Christians at large, in the present day, than calls for *active* piety. Ye that know and love the Saviour, in whatever circle ye move, awake! hear and obey the call of your Lord, "Go ye into my vineyard, and work for me." There is employment for all. A vast

variety of agency is required for the service of Christ; and every one has his part to perform. There is no licence given to silence, or to sleep. The urgency of the work to be done permits it not. The work is great, and the time is short. The glory of God and the best interests of men are the objects to be promoted; and these are graciously and happily identified. What is done to forward one will advance the other also. Ah! were this duly considered, what servant of Christ could content himself with remaining "at ease in Zion?"

Deacons, and other *members of the Churches of Christ*, see that ye be not found sitting with arms across, and holding your peace. Exert yourselves to sustain the hands, and cheer the hearts, of your ministers in the good work. Let it not suffice that you are regular and fervent in your prayers for success to *their* labours. It is your's—your duty—your privilege—to share in them. Whilst your ministers are more especially set for the defence of the Gospel, by labours of the pulpit or the press, by counselling, by exhorting, by reasoning against the encroachment of error; and, if need be, by suffering for the Gospel, it is *your* part, and an honourable and dutiful part it is, to follow up and back your leaders, like good soldiers in the same cause, strengthening and carrying forward, by active labours in your different spheres, their every effort and design for the diffusion and establishment of the truth. Go, "visit the fatherless and the

widows in their affliction." Wait on the sick and the dying; and point them to the Saviour, ere it be too late. Pray by them; speak to them, in the name of God and his Son Jesus Christ; and, as you speak, instruct, warn, invite, and strive to be efficient in plucking some as brands from the burning, and cheering and gladdening others by the bright prospect of a glorious immortality.

Teachers of Sabbath Schools, your's too is the right and liberty to speak in the Divine name, and for the Divine glory. Ye have chosen a good station in the Church of Christ, and, like every other in his service, it is a highly responsible one. Look at it only in a *prospective* light, and you will feel it to be so,—the religious character of the future generation, to a very great extent, depends, so far as instrumentality is concerned, on the spirit and manner of your training. This is a tremendous consideration, and may well call forth the exclamation, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Christ is sufficient, who is often found to work the greatest results by the feeblest means; and he is able to make all grace abound towards *you*. Speak, then, in the name of your Divine Master. Speak diligently—speak faithfully—speak tenderly, as your Lord himself would do. But you have already had many and powerful addresses made to you on your duties; I would, therefore, here be very brief. I content myself with adding—Let each one of you, as often as he comes to his class, bring with him a

vivid recollection of the charge he has received, and feel as though he heard it delivered to him afresh from the lips of the Lord Jesus, "Feed my lambs." Under this impression, and relying on his aid, pursue your task; and your works of faith, and labours of love, will not be in vain in the Lord.

Distributors of godly Tracts. To speak in this holy name is also *your* part; for we suppose you to be actuated in the good work you perform by the spirit of faith and love towards your Redeemer. Rest not, then, with the mere delivery of your silent monitors from house to house. Let that be only the key by which you open the door. Go in—seek an interview with the inmates, and, as far as in you lies, make known to them "the grace of God which bringeth salvation;" teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. You have need of prudence to guide you in this; but ask of him who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not; and ply your work with persevering punctuality. Prayer and effort united avail much.

Finally, I would beseech every Christian reader of these pages seriously to reflect on the obligations arising from *his* character, and the condition of things around him. I would thus address him, "You are a regenerated character—one of God's adopted children—a representative of Christ upon earth—the salt of the earth—a light in the world—an expectant of future glory. In consideration of

all these positions, say, what manner of person ought you to be, in all holy conversation and godliness? What watchfulness, what circumspection, what constant mistrustfulness of yourself; and what prayer and meditation, and pondering of your way, are you bound to exercise, and that at all moments of your life! And look at the condition of the world through which you are passing. What is it, but a scene of vain, bustling, and heartless contention? and it is for you to arrest the attention of giddy mortals, and allure them to nobler pursuits. What is it, but a dark place? and it is for you to shine in it, with light from heaven, and show deluded men the way thither. Alas! what is it, but a great lazaretto, where the sick, and the wounded, and the dying, and the miserable of every description, are seen crowded in its numerous wards? and it is for you to stop the progress of disease, and prevent death, by bringing to the sufferers, as extensively as your powers can reach, the remedy, the only remedy, that can meet and heal their maladies, even "the Gospel of the grace of God." Every Christian is committed to his *own share* in these exertions. But how is he to acquit himself of that share? Plainly, by diligently holding forth the word of life, and by exhibiting an unequivocal evidence of the efficacy of that word upon his own heart, and the formation of his own character, "adorning the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things." And he must everywhere press the claims of the Gospel, and seek, as far as

his influence extends, to woo and to win the sinner to the cross of Christ, to which he has himself been won, that the atonement may be seen, believed, and felt, and salvation be attained. The God of all grace incline his people, in every place, thus to live and labour, each in his own sphere! Then would the knowledge of the Lord soon cover the earth, iniquity would stop her mouth, and the kingdom of darkness would be seen retreating from before the light of Truth, and the brightness of the Saviour's coming to claim the world as his own!

LECTURE IV.

CONSOLATIONS.

"In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul."—PSALM xciv. 19.

THE life of man is a chequered scene. The gay and gloomy, light and shade,—or, in other words, joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, make up our present state of being. Not that these opposite conditions are dealt out to any in exactly equal portions,—the one or the other may be found occasionally to predominate; but trouble and sorrow are, more or less, allotted to all. Since man began to sin, he has not ceased to sorrow; and as sin has tainted all the race, its inseparable concomitants, suffering and sadness, disease and death, are equally diffused. Mourning, therefore—affliction—all the evils that corrode and destroy the human frame, are everywhere at work. At one time, we look and behold man in the bloom of youth: health and gladness sit upon his countenance; his sinews are full of strength; his step is firm; and in all his attitude there seems a proud consciousness of a soul to resolve and a nerve to perform. We look

again, and what do we see? Alas! the pale hue, the sunken eye and hollow cheek plainly tell us health is fled! The graceful form, that late trod by in full vigour and infelt power, is now broken down, and enfeebled, under the blow of some calamity. The voice, that was but just now heard in the shout of exultation, or the song of mirth, now only reaches the ear in tremulous complaints, or groans of anguish. Or perhaps we see the man laid on the bed of sickness, the victim of a wasting disease, which is hurrying him to his end. "Verily, every man, at his best state, is altogether vanity;—how is his beauty made to consume away as a moth!"

And now, if we be asked whether, in this general picture of gloom and distress, we mean to include all mankind, without distinction, the good as well as the bad, the righteous as well as the wicked? we answer that, in this respect, all are alike, the good and the bad. "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not." From sorrows, suffering, and death, there is no class of men privileged with exemption.

But as it regards the character of afflictive dispensations towards the wicked and the righteous, there is an essential and most important difference

between them. To the wicked, their aspect is *punitive;* to the righteous, it is *corrective.* In the former case, they are tokens of God's anger against the workers of iniquity, and warnings to others, that they may take heed to their ways, and sin not; in the latter case, they are the chastisements of God, in wisdom and parental love, for the spiritual benefit of his children. Of the wicked it is said, "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up." But how different it fares with the righteous! "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer." In a word, the sufferings of the one class differ in character from those of the other, as much as the classes themselves differ in their standing before God.

Our purpose in the present Lecture is to treat of Christian Consolations; but consolations necessarily suppose a state of affliction as their object: we must, therefore, advert for a while to that state, and speak of what the Christian is called to endure. The Psalmist tells us that "*many* are the afflictions of the righteous." It will be sufficient for us to notice only the more prominent. In so doing, we cannot but observe that they resolve themselves into two kinds or classes,—those that are common to Christians, with others of the race; and those that are peculiar to themselves, as the people of

God. The afflictions, and we may say the *temptations*, of the former class, such as the Apostle calls "common to man," are confessedly numerous. It cannot be otherwise; a sinful world must needs greatly abound with sources of evils to be shared by all. The Christian, then, as well as his unregenerate neighbour, is liable to Painful Vicissitudes in Life—to Poverty—to Calumny and Reproach—to Bereavements by the stroke of Death—and to Sickness of various forms.

1. The Christian is often called to endure *Painful Vicissitudes.* Our present state is one of instability and change. Of the condition of things in the world, we can scarcely ever say they are *stationary.* Time is continually shifting the scenes. In the case of our neighbours, our acquaintance, our friends, our relatives, they are not long seen in the same position. Some are changing their residences; some are rising, others sinking, in the world; and some are gone the way whence they will never return. There *are* changes in life for what we call the better, but many are undesired and very painful. The Christian may, at one time, have found himself in what he considered a favourable and happy locality, and he sang, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage;" presently, through some unforeseen and adverse circumstance, he is hurried from thence, and forced, with contracted means, to sit down where he would not. Such event, too, may

have been attended with many cruelties, on the part of his fellow-men; and certain good purposes of his own may have been blasted. All these may have proved a sharp trial. The ploughshare may have gone deep into his soul.

2. Many Christians suffer under the hard and heavy hand of *Poverty*. We need not say that this is a distressful condition of life. Some, indeed, are born and bred up in the humble cottage, and are accustomed to "vile raiment" and coarse fare. Others, from a state of easy competence, or even affluence, have been dragged down into pinching, cheerless poverty. Christians of the former class, though from habit their sufferings are not so acute, are yet frequently the subjects of corroding cares and distracting perplexities, when, perhaps, there is nothing for them but to use up the last "handful of meal in the barrel, and the little oil in the cruse," and lay them down to die. In the latter case, none but those who have experienced it can tell the bitterness of soul occasioned by the sad reverses through which they have passed. Their household conveniences, the provisions for their children, the friends of their better days, the luxury of doing good to others, their influence in society—all, all are lost, and their spirits sink within them! Ah! whether accustomed or not accustomed to it, there is, at all times, a misery in Poverty not easy to be borne.

3. The Christian may also be the subject of

Calumny and Reproach. This is a cross which the people of God, in all ages, and of all ranks and conditions in life, have been frequently called to bear. It is, indeed, one which, as well as that of poverty, the Christian knows his Master bore before him. But it is a galling cross. A good name is a dear, a cherished possession, "rather to be chosen than great riches;" and to be robbed of it is to be made poor indeed. The malicious and reproachful tongue is one of the most mischievous weapons that assail the Christian. It is grievous to the spirit of a good man, especially one of a cultivated and delicate mind, to have his character torn by false charges, and his most benevolent actions ascribed to sordid and base motives. Few things will excite resentment sooner than this. But the Christian is hated by the men of the world for his religion; and his greatest dread is frequently lest, through the slanders cast on *his* character, religion should suffer. Hence, doubtless, the complaint of David, "Because for thy sake I have borne reproach, shame hath covered my face. Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness."

4. The Christian is liable to *Bereavements from the stroke of Death.* He has, like others, a relative character. There are individuals in the world with whom he is, more or less, closely allied. He has perhaps a family, for every branch of which he warmly and tenderly feels. He has friends and

acquaintance, who claim and share his attachment in various degrees. Death enters his circle, and carries off a bosom friend. He was, perhaps, a pious, a benevolent man, and a liberal contributor to the good cause; one, perhaps, on whom the Christian had much dependance for the encouragement and support of some religious object. He much prized and esteemed him, and feels his loss a deep affliction. But the "insatiate archer" shoots at objects nearer still; and a brother, a sister, or a parent falls. This dispensation afflicts him sorely, and he bows his head in sorrow. But Death may choose a victim yet dearer—dear to him as part of himself,—the child—the wife, the desire of his eyes, may be taken from him with a stroke. Then he is a mourner indeed: anguish fills his heart; and his first impressions are those of hopeless grief and desolation.

5. The Christian is liable, as all others, to *Personal Sicknesses*, and those of various forms. These may be painful and of long continuance. Like Job of old, he may have to say, "I am made to possess months of vanity; and wearisome nights are appointed me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day!" This is sufficiently descriptive of the distress which the sick may be brought to endure.

Again, Christians are liable to afflictions and grief peculiarly their own. Of this, the causes are

not few. We will specify some of them:—their personal offences and sins against a holy and righteous God;—the sinful state of the world around them;—the sins of many professors of religion;—the unsatisfactory state of things in the Church itself.

1. The Christian grieves, and is afflicted, under a sense of *his own sins and offences* in the sight of God. The child of God, in his present state, is still a peccable being. He is not perfectly wise; and will occasionally err: he is not perfect in strength; and he will occasionally fall: neither has he attained to complete holiness of nature; and, therefore, guilt will be occasionally contracted. But, in no case, does he sin with the full bent and relish of his soul. In that respect, "he *cannot* sin; for his seed abideth in him." Through the influence of the Holy Spirit given unto him, when he *has* strayed, a reaction takes place within him. He sees and feels the hatefulness of his way; and is humbled into self-reproach, sorrow, and contrition, deep and durable according to its aggravations. He afflicts himself before his God; nor can he rest, until heart-felt tokens of pardon and acceptance, through his Advocate with the Father, be afforded him.

2. Another source of affliction and grief peculiar to the Christian is *the sinful state of the world around him.* The Scriptures describe the world as "lying in wickedness." Its spirit is at enmity

with God, and hostile to the purposes of his grace towards its salvation. The Christian contemplates this with an aching heart. Knowing from his own experience the misery of an unconverted state, and the happiness of having been brought to a saving knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, he cannot but be grieved and afflicted at heart to see crowds of immortals putting away the offer of salvation from them, and wilfully hurrying to perdition. Infatuated with sensual pleasures and sordid pursuits, they see not, nor care for, their spiritual condition, and are content to serve under the dominion of that "old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." Here the Christian's grief arises from two considerations, each of the most serious import: he grieves to see the daring breaches everywhere made of the laws of a righteous God, as well as the insults offered to his grace; and to think of the unutterably tremendous consequences to the deluded souls thus plunged into an unheeded eternity! The pious heart bleeds under considerations such as these; and the Christian cannot but cry out, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."

3. The truly Christian man is afflicted and grieved with *the sins of many professors of religion.* These are those of whom the Apostle says, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him,"—who, as he elsewhere describes them,

"have a form of godliness; but deny the power thereof." These people are actuated by the desire of satisfying conscience, while they secure to themselves certain carnal indulgences, and keep in peace and favour with the world. But their sinful conduct brings scandal upon religion, and wounds the feelings of the true friend of Christ. It grieves him, too, to think of the doom of the mere formalist, who, while he practises deceit on himself and others, forgets that he cannot deceive the Master whose name he falsely bears, and who "will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder; and appoint him a portion with hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

4. *The unsatisfactory state of things in the Church itself* is also a frequent source of affliction and grief to the Christian. The Church of Christ is the object of heaven's complacent regard. It was purchased by the Saviour's blood; it is the place where the Father loves to dwell, and the Holy Spirit to carry on and display his gracious operations. It is said of the typical Church, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." The prosperity of the Church is, therefore, dear to the Christian. It is the home of his affections. He loves its ministrations: it is there he holds communion with his God, and his brethren in Christ; there he feeds; there he grows;

and there he dresses himself for whatever service his Lord may assign him. Is there any part of his much-loved Zion showing symptoms of languor or decay?—are any of her watchmen slumbering on her walls?—are any of her people gadding about, to change their way?—are "the ways of Zion mourning, because few come to the solemn feasts?—are her gates desolate, and do her priests sigh?—are her virgins afflicted, and is she in bitterness?"—then is his soul distressed: he "eats no pleasant bread;" but sighs and laments, that where strength and beauty should never cease to be displayed, anything should ever enter to weaken or deform.

We have thus glanced at the more prominent afflictions, common and peculiar, which the Christian is called to endure. There are, doubtless, many others of a more secret nature, having to do with the man in his individual capacity; where the heart only of the sufferer knoweth his own bitterness, and where the complaint can be poured into no ear but the ear of his God. It is now, however, time to inquire after the *Consolations* provided for those afflictions. And, seeing that sources of affliction and sorrow open upon the soul of the Christian from so many quarters, and that not a few of them are very heavy and bitter to be borne, can we hope anywhere to find consolations numerous enough, and strong enough, to calm and soothe them? Where can reside the knowledge, the sympathy, the power,

adequate to afford such consolations? Assuredly not in man, nor in any creature. But from Him alone who made man, can man, when afflicted, look for effectual consolation. *His* sympathies alone are sufficiently warm and deep; *he* only can take cognizance of the inmost feelings; and *he* only has wisdom and power to administer those consolations that will not fail to relieve. Yes, God is the Author of all the Christian's consolations; and, that the afflicted soul may avail itself of them, he has kindly interspersed them throughout his word.

But let us think for a moment on what we have just said. God is the Author of Consolation! The Apostle to the Gentiles, who is remarkable for the pathos with which he frequently invests the Deity, in the lovelier and sweeter attributes that are so powerfully attractive of the Christian's heart, expressly styles him "the God of patience and *consolation;*" and again, elsewhere he says, "God that *comforteth* those that are cast down." If, then, the Christian's God be the God of his consolations, he will find them sufficient for his every want. Nothing that emanates from him can be defective. Whatever he declares to be his own is like himself. "His work is perfect." We accordingly find the Psalmist gratefully acknowledging the Divine origin and the all-sufficiency of the consolations he enjoyed, when he says, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, *thy* comforts *delight* my soul!" "They are thine," as if he had said; "and they are

transcendently great: they are thine; and they not only relieve my afflictions, but they bring delight to my soul!" Nothing less, indeed, than *Divine* consolations will suit and satisfy an afflicted believer. The comforts, and comforters too, that come from the world would prove to *his* sorrows but irksome intruders. The men of the world may hew out cisterns for themselves, and vainly imagine to draw from them the streams of life and refreshment: the best of them are deceitful vessels; they contain no water that the Christian can use. No; the waters of consolation which refresh *his* soul are drawn from "the river of the water of life, that proceedeth out of the throne of God and the Lamb" in heaven.

Drawn from so high a source, the Christian's consolations are guaranteed to him for Quality, for Abundance, for Suitability to his every case.

As to their *Quality*, the Christian finds the consolations of God ever sweet and pleasant to his soul. David found them so. He knew the unsatisfactory nature of everything else; but of the Divine consolations he testifies, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Rich, also, and soul-satisfying have they always proved to the devout partaker. When the world has assumed before the Christian a gloomy and barren aspect, he is enabled to draw from his heavenly sources, and exult in the delightful contrast, crying, "My soul shall be satis-

fied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips!"

The Christian is assured also that his consolations shall be *abundant*. He can be involved in no trouble, nor shade of trouble, where consolation will not be at hand. Hence, when David allows that *many* are the afflictions of the righteous, he meets that concession by immediately adding, "But the Lord delivereth him out of them all." And again, when meditating on the amplitude of God's goodness to him, he exclaims, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand!" The apostle Paul, confessedly the subject of many and various sufferings for his Master's sake, bears grateful testimony to the abundance of consolations, when he says, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation, who comforteth us in *all* our tribulations." Ample testimony! No words can be more expressive of a heart overflowing with the feelings of gratitude for the abundant consolations poured upon him from his God. In this abundance every afflicted Christian is made welcome to share. It is the Spirit's gracious work to apply the balm of consolation to every aching heart among his people. No sigh escapes unheard; no groan is heaved unheeded. To every believer in affliction the assurance may be repeated, "He will deliver

thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee!"

And the consolations of the afflicted Christian will ever be found *suitable* to his case. If we contemplate the consolatory character of God's word, we shall see it marked by consummate wisdom, as well as abundant mercy. We therein find every supposable position of a child of God suitably addressed. Consulting the interests of each individual member of his Church, through the whole course of time, he has graciously adjusted the language of his Word to meet their various trials and difficulties in their minutest forms. Christ emphatically declares, by the mouth of his Prophet, "The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I might know how *to speak a word in season* to him that is weary." This accordingly is a prominent characteristic of the Divine Word.

We have remarked that the Christian is liable, in common with the rest of mankind, to *painful vicissitudes* in life. It is a truth universally allowed, that "we know not what a day may bring forth." This only we know, that mutability and uncertainty are stamped on all sublunary things. And here we often betray a degree of impatience, anxious, if possible, to penetrate the dark future, and to discover our own particular destinies—our every future movement, prosperous or adverse; we wish, in short, to trace out our own history to the close of life. But, prone as we are to all this, when

we come to think rationally upon it, we are convinced of its folly. The consequences of such prospective visions, could we obtain them, would be fatal to our enjoyment of life. The veil, therefore, that covers futurity from our view "is a veil woven by the hand of mercy." The Christian willingly leaves his times and seasons in the hands of his heavenly Father, but fully expects to share in the common fluctuations of the present state. Some changes in his condition may be very painful. So far as his worldly circumstances are concerned, they may appear singularly disappointing, and even ruinous. Events of that distressful kind, when they fall on the mere man of the world, frequently drive him to despair and self-destruction,—an appalling demonstration of the extreme misery of that soul that has no hope, and that is without God in the world. The Christian, however, is one who is not afraid to look adversity in the face. When he becomes the subject of vicissitude, he is not taken by surprise; he knew full well that here he was to find no continuing city, and that the world was not his resting-place. He may, indeed, be suddenly driven from his prosperity, just at the time when, like David, he thought he should not be moved. He had been saying, "Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." Things went well with him; and while he was reckoning on a permanent enjoyment of them, his mountain is shaken: reverses, unexpected and unhappy, come

upon him, and he is troubled. But what then? Like David, too, he cries to the Lord, "Hear, O Lord! and have mercy upon me; Lord, be thou my helper!" Thus he makes God his refuge. From the uncertainty and fickleness of all worldly concerns, he looks up to him whose hand is mighty, and whose covenant is sure; and he hears the voice of consolation saying, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed!" Amidst his bitterest reverses, his heart is cheered by the gracious declaration, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Under every change his fears are met with the soothing promise, "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places;" for, in all the shiftings and changes of his lot, the Christian realizes in his God "a strong habitation, whereunto he may continually resort." And, then, the very uncertainty and frailty of the tenure by which he holds any earthly possession, only the more sweetly endears to him "that building of God, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," whither his Lord is gone before to prepare it for him. Hence the calmness of the Christian, when things appear the most annoying: hence the triumph he obtains, and the smile that lightens up his countenance, even in the most calamitous times. Truly he, if any man, may be compared

"To some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm;
Tho' round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head!"

We have said, also, that many followers of Christ suffer under the hard and heavy hand of *Poverty*. The race that men seem most generally to be running is that of wealth. The impression most prevalent seems to be that wealth is happiness; and the principle everywhere cherished and acted upon would appear to be that of sacrificing all to become rich. To be poor is equivalent to being wretched; and poverty is avoided like the plague. Alas! how false an estimate of man's true interests is involved in all this! We mean not, on the other hand, to say that Poverty, of itself, is an absolute good. Simply considered, it is no desirable condition. It is good neither for the body nor the mind, being frequently the source of wasting cares and anxieties, and even of strong temptations to sin. It limits the pious man's influence, which, under better circumstances, might be more extensively useful. It painfully deprives him of the full expression of the benevolence and generosity of his nature; and, on many occasions, he cannot but regret it. Yet there is an evil infinitely greater than that of poverty—an evil into which there is danger of running, when wealth is too eagerly pursued; for "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in

destruction and perdition." If poverty, then, is not to be desired as a good, unsanctified riches are to be deprecated as a curse. There are occasions, most certainly, when the condition of poverty is to be chosen, and that of riches to be renounced. When a rich and affluent state can be held only by the abandonment of conscience and religion, the question of preference is not, for a moment, to be balanced. The example of every true, heart-devoted Christian, in all evil times, is not merely to be admired, but followed,—"rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; and to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." Under circumstances of this kind, our Lord himself shows us how to estimate the two conditions, while he marks the contrast between them with emphatic decision. "Blessed be ye poor," he says, "for your's is the kingdom of God: blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled." But of them in the opposite case he says, "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolations! woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger!" The pious poor are special objects of heaven's care. Assurances to that effect are frequently given them, and expressed in language peculiarly tender and condescending. God is represented in his word as their Protector, their Avenger, their Refuge and Reward. "I know," says David, "that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor." "Hearken, my beloved

brethren," says the apostle James, "hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

These are a few of the many rich consolations offered to the poor of Christ's flock in Holy Writ. That they are not mere fictions of the imagination, not the extravagances of enthusiasm, but precious truths, and deep realities, we need only appeal to themselves. There is not a genuine Christian, among the poorest of mankind, that would exchange his privileges, his peace of conscience, his joy in the Holy Ghost, his hopes of a happy immortality, for all the possessions, all the pleasures the wealthiest in this world ever enjoyed. No; the poor, pious Lazarus, though pining under sores and sickness, could have had no mind to exchange conditions with the rich, luxurious man at whose gates he lay. Happy the Christian, though in a mud-walled cottage: though rags are his covering, and he is but scantily fed, his heart is sustained and comforted by the sympathies of him who occupies the throne of heaven; and he is more than contented with his lot, when he reflects, that his Divine Redeemer, while he was working out his people's salvation, chose it for himself. He, too, was poor, and had not where to lay his head. In the estimation, therefore, of the poverty-stricken Christian, "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord."

Again, the Christian may be brought to suffer

under a *calumnious and falsely-reproaching tongue;* and here consolations are provided. Men of proud, self-righteous notions are apt to profess an independence of mind, and a perfect contempt of calumny and calumniators, resting, as they tell us, on a consciousness of their own integrity. They allege it to be pusillanimous to quail under misrepresentation and malicious reproach, and will have it that an inward sense of his personal worth and purity should be sufficient to carry a man undismayed and unhurt before the world. This is not the Christian principle. As it regards his standing with his fellow-men, he is fully conscious of his innocence, and will assert it; but he is not the less distressed and grieved by calumnious treatment. Nor will he, on the ground of this consciousness, defy the malice of his slanderers, and affect to display a fortitude self-sustained. No; he humbles himself before God, and, like David, when Shimei cursed him, says, "The Lord may have sent me this scourge by the slanderer: it may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction; and that the Lord will requite me good, for his cursing this day." Committing himself thus to him who judgeth righteously, he looks to the quarter that will yield the sweetest and most effectual balm for the wounds he endures. He cannot forget the kind admonition, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that ye may be exalted in due time; casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Unlike many around

him, who receive afflictions either with the brute, stoical indifference of cattle grazing in the fields under a storm; or with mad impatience, fretting against the Lord, he reads the events of providence with the aid of light from above. The affliction from which he now suffers is an ordination of God. It is, in his view, a messenger, either sent him, or permitted to reach him, for some wise end; and he includes it among the "all things" that shall work together for his good. Is he the object of mendacious abuse? Is the purity of his principles belied? and his good name cruelly traduced? He remembers the example of his Lord, who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not;" and, in the spirit of his Divine Pattern, he restrains his resentment, and prays for them that despitefully use him and persecute him. He is thus enabled in patience to possess his soul, and enjoys a calm as much above the parade of Pagan, or anti-Christian, philosophy as the heavens are above the earth. He has a peace within that the rage of man cannot disturb. The consolatory promises of God are his stay. Enough for him his gracious declaration, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." At this promise his heart bounds with delight, and he replies, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Faith and love are brought into exercise; and the Spirit himself hushes every sigh, and casts out every fear, saying to the troubled soul, "Commit

thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day."

The Christian may also be found, like others, mourning under *bereavements from the stroke of death.* His religion does not strip him of his social feelings, nor set him above them. He is a *man*, and has the heart and all the affections of a man. He feels the force of the ties that bind him to society, in every varied relation; and when some of these are cut by the hand of death, he is sensibly wounded, and his heart bleeds in sadness. But, taught of God, he can look on this, as on other dispensations, with an enlightened eye. Under the sharpest of such trials, he is enabled to moderate his grief. In all of them he owns the sovereignty of God, who has a right to take to himself what he had lent but for a season,—who comes, not as an invader upon the social circle, but as a proprietor, to claim his own. The Christian is bereaved of a friend, or a relative, near and dear to his heart,—he mourns; but his grief is chastened by the lessons of his religion. If a pious friend or relative be taken from him, how great his consolations! "My friend, my relative," he says, "is gone to his rest, and has done with toil; he has joined the society of the saints in light, and has done with sin; he is with Christ, and is for ever blessed! Departed spirit, thou hast made a happy change! Thee I cannot mourn. Thou hast reached

thy home of glory, and, closely as our hearts were entwined together by the strong ties of kindred and of Christian fellowship, thou canst not wish to revisit me in my frail, mortal, sorrowing state. No; but henceforth be it mine to seek the same grace by which thou hast been exalted, to prepare me for a reunion with thee that shall never, never be dissolved." This is the consolation of the Christian,—a consolation which nothing but Christianity can afford. It is the prerogative of our Saviour alone to declare, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." His religion, and *his* only, sanctifies all the pious attachment, love, and friendship, begun here below, and stamps them with immortality. Here our union is often disturbed by the various imperfections, cares, and distresses, that attend our present state, and death itself comes in and breaks it up. Hence the frequent griefs and lacerations of heart to which we are now exposed. But how are those griefs assuaged? how are we made to smile, even in our tears, and our hearts to throb with gladness, when we call to mind the Saviour's song of triumph: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction!" The Christian is, therefore, entitled to anticipate a period when those of whom he is now bereaved shall be regained; for we cannot forego the animating, and, as we think, Scripture-founded

belief, that there will be a recognition of pious friendships and relationships in heaven. He will regain them, we say, and that in a far more exalted and purified state than was ever enjoyed below. Friendship and love will then glow in a pure and heavenly flame, unchecked, uncooled, by fears, anxieties, or doubts. Among the saints in light there cannot be other than a conscious congeniality of soul, ever manifesting itself in reciprocity of affection, in harmony of spirit, and in their every social employment. Delightful prospect for the Christian! And to all this he looks forward, not as to a flattering probability, not as to a thing he fondly wishes for, but as to a *reality* assured to him by the will of One who cannot deceive—One to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, and who has left that will recorded for the encouragement of his people in all generations: "Father! I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory!"

Another affliction to which we have said the Christian is liable, in common with others, is that of *personal sickness in various forms.* Sickness and disease, whenever inflicted, with all other calamities that mankind endure, are the fruits of sin. In some cases, indeed, they are sent as punitive expressions of God's displeasure with some particular sin then committed, of which instances are given us in Scripture. But they are also the dispensations of God's hand to try, to chasten, to purify, his own

people. In the latter case, they are the rod in a Father's hand. Correction of error,—rousing from dangerous slumber,—humbling an inflated spirit,—prevention from going into temptation, are the desirable, the merciful, ends which parental wisdom effects by this rod. Undoubtedly, all the afflictions of the Christian are, as we have already observed, of a corrective character; but a personal sickness, a malady that prostrates the strength of the frame and the buoyancy of the spirit, is often found to speak a wholesome lesson with peculiar quickness and power. It tells him speedily and sensibly of his own weakness and helplessness. He hears, as well as feels, the rod; he is soon at the throne of grace, and cries out, "O Lord! rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." It tells him of some wandering from God, of some slothfulness, some negligence, of which he has been guilty, or of some carnal principle he has indulged. He is roused to shame and contrition. He acknowledges God's righteousness, and his own sinfulness. "I know, O Lord!" he says, "that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. But, Lord! thou hast said, Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold I come unto thee; for thou art the Lord, my God." Thus is the Christian brought to feel his need of pardon, and to sue for it. His affliction has the effect of driving him to lay hold of the strength of his heavenly Father, through

the Mediator, that he may make peace with him. The Father drops the rod, and the pardoned Christian hears him speak the language of tenderness and endearment: "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him!"

Having thus adverted to certain afflictions which the Christian endures, in common with others, together with some of their appropriate consolations, we come now to those of the other class. To the truly pious Christian there belongs a peculiarity of character, exposing him to peculiar trials and sorrows. That character is one into which he did not naturally grow up, but into which he has been graciously formed by the power of the Holy Spirit. In his natural character he belonged to the world. He then shared in the afflictions common to man, and felt and regarded them as men of the world do. But when he is chosen out of the world, and a new nature is given him, he becomes susceptible of other impressions and another experience, to which his new nature subjects him. He is made acquainted with cares, anxieties, and sorrows which belong exclusively to him and his brethren in Christ. From these the mere worldling escapes; because he stands not in the same relation with the Christian to the sources whence they arise. They are of a *spiritual* character, and can be only *spiritually* felt.

In addition, then, to the calamities and afflictions common to man, the Christian is conscious of *a source within himself* of not unfrequent grief, and even anguish of mind. The sin that still dwelleth in him, or "the law in his members warring against the law of his mind," strives to regain the mastery, and, at times, prevails. On such occasions the pious soul is grieved, and, according to the degree or aggravation of the guilt incurred, is cast down and disquieted; for the Christian cannot sin without being soon made sensible of it. He grieves that he has relaxed his watchfulness, that he has restrained prayer, that he has allowed the world to engross his affections, or the devices of Satan to beguile him into transgression. He thinks of his fall, or his backsliding, with shame and self-reproach. Contrasting his unfaithfulness with the goodness of his God, he charges himself with base ingratitude and rebellion. A feeling of his delinquency, therefore, presses heavily upon his heart; and he can give himself no rest, till he has poured out his confessions in penitential sorrow before God. In this exercise he is not left to a fruitless affliction of soul. The Spirit leads him afresh to the atonement of his Saviour, and renews to his conscience the application of that blood that cleanses from *all* sin. On this his faith lays hold; his confidence is restored; and he can say with a grateful heart, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions

unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." The Saviour's consolatory promise is directed specially to those who mourn the sins of their own hearts: "Blessed are ye that mourn; for ye shall be comforted." Their's is a godly sorrow—a sorrow that can arise only in the heart that feels for the honour of God, that respects his righteous law, and has a lively sense of the claims which his grace and goodness have upon the obedience of the life. Such is the heart that is alone susceptible of godly sorrow.

The sorrow of the worldling is far from possessing anything of this pure, this generous, character. It is a foolish, contracted, selfish, emotion, arising from an undue attachment to perishing objects. Such a sorrow tends not to good, but worketh death. Not so the sorrow that exercises the heart of the Christian. It is that which we have seen worketh repentance; and the Apostle tells us, "Repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of." This sorrow is a gracious feeling. It is wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God himself; and, accordingly, its results are all delightful,—repentance, pardon, acceptance, and joy. For this sacred sorrow the consolations of the Spirit are abundantly offered. In reference to this sorrow, we read, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." Happy the soul that is in such a case!

But, besides this source of feeling arising within the Christian's own heart, there are, as we have remarked, other sources *without* him, which afflict him in no small degree,—the sinful state of the world around him—the conduct of many professors of religion—and the unsatisfactory state of the Church itself. In all these the Christian is deeply interested; for in whatever concerns the well-being of man, and the glory of God, he is concerned. The religion of Christ has in it a spirit of ennobling and expansive energy, disposing him who is animated by it to ally himself, in his views and feelings, with the universe of heaven and earth. He looks around him, and sees the world alienated from God. It is consequently at enmity with godliness, and persecutes the Christian. But, grievous and annoying as this often proves, it is not because of the injuries it inflicts upon *him* that the Christian weeps for the world. It is on a far higher principle, and a more extended view of the case of mankind at large, that he pities and laments it. He thinks, with deep anguish of spirit, on the vast numbers that are daily perishing in their sins; and he cannot but long for the evangelization of the whole fallen and infatuated race. For this he prays; and, in his sphere, for this he labours. Nor is he without his consolations here. Notwithstanding the long, long, period that this world has lain under the dominion of sin and Satan, God has not abandoned it to destruction. He gave his Son to redeem it, and that at a mighty

cost. It is promised, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." And O how much is there involved in that travail! and what must be the amount that shall satisfy the soul of Christ? Nothing less than "a great multitude that no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." The promise of the Father is pledged for this: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The Divine pledge will be redeemed. The day is approaching for it. Every movement in the natural and moral world is being made subservient to it. The great design will keep its onward course, until loud voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever!"

Again, the Christian is often called to lament *the conduct of many professors of religion.* Everything great or lofty has its imitators; every excellency, its counterfeits; but of all counterfeits, that of religion is the worst. It proves, indeed, the reality and actual existence of the true Christian character; for, as it has been well observed, "There would have been no counterfeits, but for the sake of something real. Though pretenders seem to be what they really are not, yet they pretend to be something that really is." The formalist, then, is a living testimony to the reality of genuine piety.

But to the truly pious man the case of the formalist is a source of grief; because of the awfully dangerous position in which it places him, and of the scandal he brings from an ignorant world upon the profession of religion. It is attended, however, with some salutary exercises in the Christian himself. He is led, from his observation of the counterfeit, to examine more closely the characteristics of true godliness. It sends him to self-scrutiny. He thinks of this admonition, "Be not high-minded, but fear." In fine, it brings him no small consolation, when he is made conscious of a growing desire to make his own calling and election sure, and when it brings him humbly and earnestly to cry, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Lastly, *the state of things in the Church itself*, as we have observed, is often a cause of grief to the Christian. With the Church of Christ, in all its interests, he is closely allied. He is, indeed, fully aware that the cause of the Church is the cause of God; that He will protect it; and that its final triumph is secured. "It is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It is a cause which has been steadily advancing, is now advancing, and will advance, until it become "the joy of the whole earth." Yet, in some of its localities, it may be suffering. If with any of these he should be connected, and should perceive church-

discipline becoming lax—love growing cold—peace and union disturbed—devotion and effort languishing—or the faith of some church-members unsettled and doubtful, he cannot but deeply mourn. In such cases, however, the truly devout man betakes himself to prayer; for which he draws encouragement from the word of God himself, who calls him to it: "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." This very call to urgency with God for such a purpose carries with it a consolatory assurance that it shall be fulfilled. Notwithstanding the partial evils the Christian witnesses, and justly laments, he is cheered by the consideration that the great Head of the Church will heal them all; that "no weapon formed against her shall prosper; that he will beautify the place of his sanctuary; and upon all her glory there shall be a defence." Yes; though he looks at some things in the Church with unavoidable regret and sorrow, he can, at the same time, labour and pray, with perfect confidence, for the accomplishment of his best hopes respecting her, sustained and consoled by the promise so amply given him: "The Lord will comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord."

And now, after having specified some of the more prominent afflictions to which the Christian is exposed, and pointed briefly to the consolations pro-

vided for them, let us, for a while, study the *Spirit in which the afflictions are to be endured, and the consolations enjoyed.* This is an important part of our subject. The apostle James says, "Behold we count them happy which endure." His meaning evidently is not that we count any happy merely because they are sufferers, but because of the patient spirit with which they suffer. This is proved by his immediately referring to the patience of Job, as a case in point. The Christian, under trial and affliction, is entitled to the consolations of God only as he dutifully bears them. And, perhaps, he will best learn his duty here by considering the end and purpose of God in his afflictions. Now God, graciously assuming the character of a Father, and acknowledging those whom he has received in Christ as his children, cannot deal with them but in love. Whatever, therefore, he grants them, whatever he withdraws from them, whatever he imposes upon them, must be for their benefit. If he bring them into the net, if he lay affliction upon their loins, it is to prove them, to try them, as silver is tried. Look at the refiner,—he flings his gold into the furnace, that it may come out the purer. And for what end does the husbandman drive the ploughshare over his land, or the gardener employ his knife upon his trees, but to make them fruitful? In this light are the afflictions of God's people to be viewed. He designs their improvement in the various graces of the Spirit. He will have them

walk before him as children ought to walk—more and more in his own likeness. It is, therefore, in the spirit of a child of God that the Christian should submit to all his dispensations; and, in this filial spirit, he will—

1. *Acknowledge his heavenly Father's hand in whatever befalls him.* Unlike the man of the world, of whom we read that "God is not in all his thoughts," which is practical atheism, the truly pious man indulges no thought unconnected with God. He believes, and realizes the fact, that "in him he lives, and moves, and has his being;" that, as the creature of God, he is the subject of his natural and moral government; and that, as a Christian, he is the object of his special, his fatherly, his covenant love and care. His Lord has told him, that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without his heavenly Father; and that the very hairs of his head are all numbered. Nothing, therefore, can occur to him, but by *his* permission or appointment. In this belief he rests, and enjoys his being. The Christian, acting in his proper character, is the most calm, unruffled, dignified, among men! He looks on all events, as they change, public or private, relative or personal, without fear or dismay; because, whatever their aspect may be to the eye of man, his Father rules them all; and all will be made to contribute to the real interests of them who are his: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong

in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." In his personal concerns, he derives his sweetest consolation from the habit of viewing God in all of them, delighted with nothing so much as recognising the continual presence of God with him, and saying, "Thou, God, seest me!" Even in the darkest dispensation, it is his privilege to hear the voice of his Saviour and Friend, calling to him, "It is I; be not afraid!"

2. The Christian, in the spirit of filial duty, will acknowledge his afflictions as *tokens of his Father's displeasure with his sins, as well as of love to his soul.* God is too wise a Father not to see folly in his children, and too holy in his nature not to be displeased with it. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity." The law of his house is express upon that point; his children may read it there: "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." This law he has put in force with all his children. He did so with Job, who, good and upright as he was, had dross to be purged away in the furnace of affliction. He did so with David, who acknowledges, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word:" and in the case of sinning Israel, the Lord tells them, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

Christian, think of this! It is no light matter to

sin against God. It partakes of the spirit of rebellion, and is imminently dangerous to thyself. But, rather than suffer thee to be condemned with the world, thy Father in heaven will visit every unmortified sin of thine with punishment. "He will make thy own wickedness to correct thee, and thy backslidings reprove thee, until thou know and see that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." Take thyself, then, to task, and examine thy own case, when under affliction. Job begged of the Lord to show him wherefore he contended with him: we would have thee ask that question of thyself. Search and see if thou canst not find within thee reason enough for the infliction of the rod. Examine impartially, and know, whether thou art chargeable with forgetfulness of God, or conformity to the world, or pride and self-sufficiency, or neglect of some Christian duty. If thy conscience bear witness against thee, if thy own heart condemn thee, then "Humble thyself under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt thee in due time." For this is thy consolation,—thy afflictions, however severe, are tokens also of love to thy soul. It was in love, free, sovereign, love, that he chose thee at first—in love he effectually called thee, and that same love determines him to use all means to keep thee, and make thee meet for himself. Has he hedged up thy way with thorns, and made a wall, so that thou canst not find thy paths?—do the waves and the billows of affliction go over thee?—

or, dost thou complain, like David, "Day and night thy hand is heavy upon me?" Well, hear his own reason for all this: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." With this agree the words of the Apostle, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son that he receiveth;" and the Psalmist confirms it with this testimony, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord! and teachest out of thy law." Blessed, indeed; for he chastens his children "for their *profit*, that they may be partakers of his holiness!"

If thy afflictions, then, are just so many expressions of parental love, would it be well for thee to go without them? Assuredly not; for then a special evidence of thy filial relationship would be wanting. All God's children partake of this discipline; and wert thou entirely without it, thou wouldst be none of his. Left without it, thou wouldst soon be found walking in thy own by-paths, contrary to God, who would also walk contrary to thee, and punish thee yet seven times for thy sins. If so, then thank God, not only for the sweet he allows thee to enjoy, but for the bitter also that he mingles in thy cup; for "Afflictions," to use the words of an old divine, "are then blessings to us, when we can bless God for afflictions, whose single view, in causing us to pass through the fire, is only to separate the sin he hates from the soul he loves." Under such considerations, it becomes thee, in the spirit of the Apostle, to rejoice and glory in thy tribulations; and let

their fruit be patience; but "Let patience have her perfect work, that thou mayest be perfect and entire, wanting nothing," which leads us to remark that—

3. The spirit of filial duty will dispose the Christian *to seek, in prayer, for the pardon of his sins, and for every grace needful to sustain him under his afflictions, through the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.* When things go smoothly with us—when our plans succeed—when our expectations are gratified, and the sunshine of prosperity seems to settle upon us, we become secure, and are apt to slide into sins, and speedily forget that we have sinned. But let afflictions come, let the rod be used, and our sins are brought to our remembrance. A Christian, in such a case, cannot be easy. Guilt and terror will, more or less, distress his conscience. It is well for him to take the alarm; but his proper course for relief is to apply, by earnest prayer, to the atoning blood of the Saviour, that his conscience may be therein purified, pardon be obtained, and peace restored. This is the only balm for his wound; this the only laver in which to wash and be clean. The enlightened Christian will take no other course. He will put no confidence in any resolutions of his own; no, nor in his contrite feelings: he will simply, but believingly, look to Christ, his propitiation. As the wounded and dying Israelites looked to the brazen serpent, and were healed, so will he look to Christ. If conscious that his heart has been betrayed into a surrender of those affections to the

creature that were due only to the Creator, he will own his guilt, and, casting himself on the mercy of God in Christ, will seek reconciliation through him. He will put away the evil thing that has estranged him from his God, saying, "What have I to do any more with idols? I have borne chastisement; I will not offend any more." Thus he recovers the evidences of his interest in his heavenly Father's love; for he is a God ready to pardon, and waits to be gracious. The communion of the penitent soul is now renewed. The sweet accents of his voice are heard, "I will forgive thine iniquity; and I will remember thy sin no more;" while the Christian's heart gratefully responds, "I will be glad, and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities." But while he earnestly sues for the pardon of sin, the godly man also urges his prayer, through the same all-prevalent name, that, if it be not consistent with the Divine purpose to withdraw the rod, he would bestow every grace needful to support him under it. Such is the exercise God himself enjoins. His own words are, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify me." The Christian accordingly prays for strength, that he may not faint nor repine under affliction; for light in his soul, that he may read the dispensations of God aright; for a patient and submissive spirit; for faith in his word and promises; for an increased love to, and desire for, entire conformity to the

Divine nature; for a brighter and brighter hope of the blissful inheritance before him; in short, for every grace that shall enable him to glorify God, even in the fires. These are legitimate objects of prayer; and, rising up before God in the incense of the Redeemer's merits, they are graciously received. "Fear not," is the promise returned; "for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee!"

But we cannot contemplate the blessedness of the man to whom these great privileges belong, who, even in his deepest affliction, is supported and cheered by consolations so abundant and so rich, without great heaviness and sorrow of heart, on account of the many who have neither part nor lot in the matter. To a Christian mind, the thought of their condition is appalling. Alas! how many of our race pursue the baubles of time, as though they had no spiritual and eternal interests to care for! The flattery of a vain world, the business and pleasures of sense, fill up all their desires. The knowledge of God, the possession of his favour, the glories and felicities of a future heaven, have no attraction for them. They dislike and reject the thought

of such things. Religion, with its many references to God, with its warnings, its admonitions, its precepts, its invitations, its promises—religion is an unwelcome intrusion. God calls upon them by his providence, by his word, by his ministers; but they say unto him, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Deplorable condition! What must be the consequence of a course like this? What, but God's taking *his* course, and pronouncing the awful alternative, "They are joined to idols,—let them alone!" Alas! nothing can be more dreadful than this. A sinner left to himself!—it is to insure his perdition! Every warning, every check, every thing salutary, is removed out of his way; and clear space is given him, to run headlong to his ruin. Follow him now, for a little, in his mad career. See, he has gone the whole round of this world's enjoyments. His youth has been spent, it may be, in dissipation, or in amassing a heap of earthly pelf, or in gaining a name and distinction among men. Adversity overtakes him,—his constitution is broken up, and disease ravages his frame,—or his riches have taken wing, and flown away,—or, from some sad vicissitude, human favour is turned to a frown, and the sunshine of fortune is intercepted by the dark cloud of a hopeless calamity. What is he *now?*—a miserable wreck among the many thousands of this world's dupes! Stretched on a bed of wasting sickness, or tortured with the mortifications of grievous

reverses, where is *he* to find consolation? Will the maxims of the world soothe him *now?* Alas! he and the world are parting.—Will his infidel philosophy avail him in his hour of need? No: he has found it to be a refuge of lies; and he has said in his heart, "As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? —this also is vanity!" Wretched man! the enemy is upon him, and there is none to help! Like Saul, at the close of his reign, he cannot but exclaim in the bitterness of his soul, "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me!" O what, under such circumstances, would he give for the Christian's consolations! But these are all founded on principles which he had disclaimed, and held in contempt; and he feels that he dare not appropriate them. There is nothing now for him, but to eat the fruit of his own way; and breathe out his vain, feverish, life in unavailing groans and woful despair!

Oh! it is not possible to represent on a written page what we feel at heart, when we draw such a picture! But let us ask, Does this happen to be read by any one whose conscience tells him he is yet a stranger to the hope of the Gospel? We would affectionately, we would earnestly, entreat him to lay this matter seriously to heart. Fellow-sinner, we would pray thee, as thou regardest thy peace for time and for eternity,—as thou wouldest enjoy the being which God has given thee, look to

thy spiritual state. Inquire of thy own heart, whether thou hast ever felt thyself in a lost condition, and in need of a Saviour; whether thou hast been brought to the cross of Christ, and seen him there wounded for thy transgressions, and bruised for thine iniquities? It is in this interesting attitude that Christ has been held up before thee in the Gospel. If thou hast not yet been attracted by this wonderful spectacle—not yet won to believe in his atonement, and to trust thyself to it as a helpless sinner, we call upon thee to come at once, and receive the offered salvation. The case is urgent.—Christ himself calls thee,—thou hast need of him,—there is salvation in no other; but when thou hast fled to him, and he is formed in thee the hope of glory, then happy shalt thou be! Thy portion will be rich; for thou wilt have God for thy Father, Christ for thy Advocate and Intercessor, and the Holy Spirit for thy Comforter and Guide into all truth. And whereas, before, thou didst walk in darkness, thou wilt be light in the Lord. Then come what may, in health, or in sickness; in prosperity, or in adversity; in life, or in death, thy safety wilt be secure. Thy life will then be hid in Christ with God. In common with thy brethren in the world, thou mayst be called to endure hardness and grief, for conscience toward God; but in common also with them, thou wilt be free to all the promises of God's word, to all its delightful consolations, and wilt

join in the triumphant language of the followers of Christ, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal!"

LECTURE V.

THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."—1 PETER i. 3, 4.

THERE is, perhaps, no affection of the mind more pleasurable to it, certainly none more tenaciously indulged, than hope. It is the universal tenant of the human breast, and more or less influential in all. We live upon hope. In every grade of society, in every variety of life, it is found indispensable to support, to animate, or to cheer. It is needful to sustain existence. Without it, the peasant could not labour; the prince could not enjoy; the husbandman could neither plough nor sow; the merchant could not embark in his hazardous speculations; nor the student ply his studies. The hope of gainful results, of some future good to be enjoyed, is the sustaining power, is the force within which impels to action. Every one may be said to have some favourite object in view, at which he most

strenuously aims—some elevation—some resting-point—some enjoyment, for which he puts forth his toil and labour, in the attainment of which they are to terminate, and find their reward. It is the inspiration of hope that nerves his arm, that urges his perseverance. But this noble passion of the soul is not only a stimulant to the active powers of man, it is his solace also in affliction, a balm for the troubles of his mind. The ills of life, whether inflicted on the body, or on the estate, are mitigated by hope. It points the sufferer to a day of relief; and consoles him with the prospect of ease, pleasure, or plenty, that may yet be his.

If hope, then, merely as a natural exercise of the mind, be thus important and influential, and if it be thus friendly to man in reference to his temporal interests, how much more important and estimable must it be, as a Christian grace, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit? The hope that is bounded by time, and fixed on objects only temporal, is precarious at best, depending on human will, or shifting events, all which are proverbially uncertain. Such a hope, too, is comparatively poor; its object, when realized, often proving valueless, and a mockery. Nothing which has reference merely to the present life can satisfy the longings of the soul. Let it be what it may, it is perishable, and was never intended to fill the wants of that which is immortal. Sooner might the human frame be fed on stones or ashes, than the nobler and never-dying spirit subsist on, and be

content with, aught the world can afford. The soul of the worldling, indeed, is, for a season, fed with delusive hopes. He sees, or fancies he sees, a distant good inviting him to pursue, that he may overtake and enjoy it. Yielding to the enchantment, he goes after the visionary bliss. He exerts all his faculties, he plies every means to arrive at it. He may, or he may not, succeed. But, see! he reaches the object; and what does it prove to be?—a phantom! The result is bitter disappointment; and, if the error be not corrected in time, and a wiser and holier course not adopted, the truth of the neglected Scripture will be exemplified upon him, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." This is a hope that makes ashamed. But the Christian's hope, kindled up and sustained by fire from above, will *not* deceive him. While it is infinitely grander, as to its object, than any earthly hope can presume to be, its foundation is stronger than that of the world itself. His is a confidence whose inspiration prompts him to exclaim, "Therefore will not I fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." The apostle Peter, contemplating the privileges of the Christian, and more especially the bright expectation he is entitled to indulge, calls it a *lively* hope. The epithet he applies is as just as it is spirited. This grace in the Christian is a lively, a *living* principle, by

which he is stimulated to every conflict in the spiritual warfare; while, like a consoling and strengthening angel, it attends him in his tribulations, his sicknesses, and his trials. He may sometimes droop, and be in heaviness; but this *lively* attendant never entirely fails, never wholly abandons him, but enlivens and cheers him to the last. This the men of the world do not understand. They altogether mistake the case of the Christian. They think he is dragging on a sad and gloomy existence; that he is foolishly refusing the gains and the pleasures of the present life, and practising afflictions and self-denial that can answer no adequate purpose. But they know not the sweetness, nor the strength, of the hope that lives in him; they hear not the blessed promises which that hope whispers to his soul; they see not the glorious prospects it opens to his delightful view; in fine, they are strangers to the principles of the Divine life—they cannot know them, "because they are spiritually discerned." There are no opposite things between which there is a more real and substantial difference, than that between the worldling and the Christian. The man of the world seeks present gratification. The world, which is always nearest at hand, presents its attractions, and makes its promises. He believes them; they suit his vitiated taste; and, with eager expectation, he presses forward to catch the fancied prize. But, all the while, he is like "a bird that hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."

It is far otherwise with the Christian. He has been taught to make a very different election. Not that he stands before us as one that had never tried the world, and had therefore never been its dupe; that had never soiled his feet in its polluted paths, nor leant upon it, and had his hand pierced as with a broken reed. No;—all this he may have done—all this he may have experienced; but, through the grace of God, he has been convinced of the evil and danger of such a state, and has fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before him. He has renounced the world: its vanities no longer allure him; he is no longer enslaved by its spirit and maxims. He loves not the practices and deeds to which it impels its votaries; but testifies of them, that they are evil. Beauties infinitely more attractive have won his heart; honours infinitely more noble, and more durable, now court his ambition; and his soul-animating hopes are now fixed on an infinitely higher inheritance than the world, with all its kingdoms, can afford. And of what does the inheritance, the object of his hope, consist? Of nothing less than an eternity of bliss and glory in the kingdom of heaven. The Apostle describes it as "an inheritance *incorruptible*, *undefiled*, and that *fadeth not away*,"—characteristics that can suit none other: they are applicable only to the *heavenly* inheritance.

This inheritance is the subject of our present meditation; and in further pursuing it, we will avail ourselves of the characters suggested by the apos-

tolic description. One great object with the Apostle, to whose words we have referred, in writing to his scattered and persecuted brethren, is evidently to cheer and elevate their minds, by reminding them of the rich and ennobling privileges to which they were entitled. He seems as if he had taken up the pen, while his own heart was glowing with the gratitude and joy he sought to kindle in their's. The warmth of his emotions makes him hasten to give prominence to the subject, by introducing it immediately after his salutation; and his views of the Christian's privileges are such, that when he begins to speak of them, it must be in the language of praise. "Blessed," he exclaims, "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

The epithet *incorruptible* may be considered as meaning *imperishable*, and therefore expressing PERPETUITY;—*undefiled*, *stainless*, signifying PURITY;—that *fadeth not away*, *incapable of decay*, or *withering*, and it expresses IMMUTABILITY.

The inheritance, then, which is reserved for the Christian is—

I. PERPETUAL, or ETERNAL. The inspired writers love to speak of the heavenly inheritance under the

attribute of eternal duration. The apostle Paul says, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, *eternal* in the heavens." The apostle John, in his Apocalypse, says, the redeemed in heaven "shall reign for ever and ever." And we have our Lord's confirmation of the doctrine, who declares, that "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." But passages to that effect are numerous, and need not be multiplied here. An inheritance, indeed, in the world to come, which should fall short of *eternal*, would not be suitable to the nature of man. He is himself an immortal creature; and he cannot be fully satisfied with an inheritance that is not co-extensive with his own existence. His spirit, imprisoned as it now is, in its clay tenement, gives frequent intimation of unbounded aspirations —of desires too vast for earth, or time itself to fill. Full well he knows that this world is not his resting-place; that here he has no continuing city: he seeks one to come; and that one, to suit the wants and desires of his spiritual life, must be an enduring one. Suppose, for a moment, a saint in heaven, in his entire nature, when the mortal body shall have put on immortality, and been united with the immortal spirit,—suppose him, body and soul glorified together, in the full enjoyment of the beatific vision of his God and Saviour, gazing with growing wonder on the majesty and glory of him who

occupies the supreme throne, and basking in the beams of his complacency and love, as they are poured upon him in noon-tide blaze, to be suddenly assured from authority that all this extatic blessedness was coming to an end, and all the unspeakable glory that encircled him was to be blotted out for ever, how would all his delights be dashed with dread forebodings of the threatened extinction!—how would distress and anguish seize upon the soul, so much the more pungent from the exalted blessedness and glory to which he had been admitted! Could there be a mere doubt created as to the perpetuity of his bliss, it would be insupportable. No; in that case, it could not be a *rest* for the people of God,—it could not be heaven. Besides, the human being is an intelligent creature, capable of indefinite improvement, possessed of powers of mind fitted for perpetual exertion. In the present life these powers do little else than commence operations, and try their strength. A man's time here is not sufficient to allow them free and full play; for how soon does he return to his earth! and "in that very day his thoughts perish." But when the Christian has passed a perfected and glorified saint into the kingdom of his Lord, the faculties of his soul, escaped from the checks and hinderances of the flesh, will spread out and expatiate far beyond all their former excursions. What before he saw darkly, as through a glass, he will then see face to face: before, he knew but in part; there, he will know even as he

is known. The blessedness and glory of his state will, indeed, be ever full: but his capacities will be ever expanding; and he will accordingly be receiving new accessions of bliss, and shining in still increasing degrees of glory to all eternity. How grand the idea!—an intelligent being, exquisitely sensible of the happiness of his condition, making endless advances in the perfections of his nature, and gaining greater and greater degrees of resemblance to the adorable Creator himself, yet ever remaining at an infinite distance from him! There is a sublimity in this beyond the grasp of any created mind.

But let us meditate a little more closely on the nature and qualities of this expected inheritance. It is, indeed, a subject on which we can say but little with precision. If we be asked *where* the seat of this inheritance is? what the region or the place it occupies? we can only answer as the Scriptures have taught us,—it is "in heaven." The eternal inheritance "is reserved *in heaven* for them who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." If we be asked again, Where is the *place* of heaven? of this we must acknowledge our ignorance; though, no doubt, it has a *locality*, and is not merely a *state of being*. We cannot tell the particular quarter or district of creation chosen for the ultimate residence of the redeemed and glorified family; but wherever it is, we know that, for amplitude, and blessedness, and glory, it is infinitely

beyond all created power to describe, or even conceive. "In my Father's house," said Christ to his disciples, "are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you;" and when the Son of God himself condescends to make preparations, how transcendently excellent and glorious may we expect them to be! "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But though no one already in possession of this inheritance has returned to give us a description of it,—though we are precluded, by the very constitution of things, from seeing it, and taking cognizance of it for ourselves, while in the body,—yet, by the aid of revelation, as by a spiritual telescope, we can discover some portion of its grandeur, its beauty, and its adaptation to the everlasting happiness of its possessors. Even by this aid, it is true, all that we can *now* discover of the preparations that Christ has made for his people falls, and must necessarily fall, vastly short of the reality. Our present state is incapable of admitting a full and unveiled manifestation. Yet has the Holy Spirit, in his word, indulged us with various glimpses of the blessed inheritance calculated to inform our minds, to cheer our hope, and to strengthen our faith. Accordingly, we are permitted to see it under the figure of—

1. A *Rest* for the people of God,—an *everlasting* rest. The Israelites of old, during their long wanderings through the wilderness, and their sharp

warfare with the nations in their way, looked forward to Canaan, their promised inheritance, as the land of their final rest. Animated by this hope, they endured and fought, until "the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers." That rest was typical of the inheritance of the saints in light. Their's was an earthly inheritance; this is heavenly: their's was temporal; this is eternal. If their's was a welcome rest, after many physical exertions, many bodily fatigues, thrice welcome will be this heavenly rest to the glorified Christian, when he shall have done with all the labours of his upward course, and the warfare he has had to carry on against his foes. Especially sweet and delightful will this rest be to the saint who has closed a career of diligent, self-denying, devoted piety, and who, after something of apostolic zeal and labour, can say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Such a servant of Christ, who has been enabled, through grace, to sustain a laborious service, enters upon his inheritance with a high relish for the rest which it will afford him. It is labour that sweetens rest; and in proportion to the length and pressure of the labour will be the sweetness of the rest enjoyed. The man of daily toil, who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, can much better appreciate, and more keenly relish, the hour of repose, than he who is accustomed to ease and listless inactivity. The soldier, long

harassed with marches and counter-marches, pressed with the constant weight of his armour, exposed to frequent watching under every severity of weather, and then, worn out and exhausted with the toils and struggles of the battle-field, when all is brought to a successful issue, and repose is granted him, how much more exquisite will the enjoyment of that repose be to him, than it can be to any one who has never left the quiet of his home, who has never endured such a service! And the mariner, who has been tossed about for days and nights on the troubled sea, and has contended again and again with tempests that threatened the destruction of the bark to which he was committed, when he has at last reached his desired haven, will be conscious of a much livelier sense of gratification and delight, than he who, having spent his days on land, has never known the toils of a seaman, nor the dangers of the deep. So will it be with the active, well-tried Christian, when he enters on his rest. This rest, which is promised him in his future inheritance, is an element in his blessedness to which the Holy Spirit has alluded with particular prominence. When the voice from heaven was heard saying, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth," it is added, "Yea, saith the Spirit, *that they may rest* from their labours; and their works do follow them." Their works of faith and labours of love will then be over, and their rest will be sweet.

These words of the Spirit, however, convey a meaning beyond this, and that a meaning of no small importance. Their works do follow them, as so many attestations to their faithfulness in the service of Christ—to the toils, the trials, the persecutions, they endured for the glory of God, and the salvation of men; and according to these will be the degree of blessedness and glory to which they will be elevated in heaven. They that *suffered* with Christ will also *reign* with him. The smallest service for Christ will not go without its reward; but to them who have forsaken kindred and lands, and endured the loss of all things, for his sake, he has promised a hundredfold, with life everlasting. "This," says the Apostle, "this I say, He who soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully;" and Christ hath declared, that when he shall come in the glory of his Father, "he will reward every man according to his works." Thus do the works of the departed saint follow him,—not to claim the rewards of merit, (for then they had need to go *before* him, instead of *following* after him), but as evidences and titles given him of Christ, whose previous work alone, in his behalf, had procured him the inheritance. His reward is in no sense the reward of *debt*, but of *grace;* and his "own works," as has been well observed, "are merely the proportional measures of his reward."

But we were contrasting the Christian's present

state with that which he has in prospect. Returning to that topic, we must observe of *every* Christian, of whatever degree, whether more or less eminent, that he is confessedly a *labourer*. In this respect, no one is singular. All are labourers. He who is not Christ's labourer,—labouring in Christ's service, and for his own salvation,—is the labourer of the world and of Satan,—labouring for damnation! The man of the world thinks the labour of the Christian mere drudgery; and represents his life as one of fruitless painstaking, hardship, and affliction; and calls it the more foolish, because *voluntary;* while his own is a life of ease, liberty, and self-enjoyment. But he belies the case altogether; the reverse is the truth. It is the worldling who is the drudge. Think of the many rigid masters *he* has to serve,—his own evil passions and appetites—a hard, unfeeling world, to whose whims and caprices he must bow, as to authority—and the Devil himself, by whom he is led captive at his will; and, alas! the service he renders to such masters is all the more dreadful, because *voluntary*.

The Christian's labour is, in a great measure, spent in opposing and overcoming the tyrants which the unregenerate man, the worldling, obeys. He has to labour, to watch, and to pray, against his own earthly and carnal propensities, which are not yet entirely eradicated. The Christian is soon made to know that conversion is not conquest. The sight of the cross of Christ, which the Holy Spirit

has given him, has indeed humbled and dissolved him into contrition; it has moved him to hatred of sin, and to faith in the blood of atonement for forgiveness and acceptance. But enemies to his peace still maintain their hold. The flesh still aims at the ascendant over the mind. Sinful emotions will rise in the heart; covetousness will seek to insinuate itself into his motives; and he is of all men the best assured of the truth, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The fascinations, too, of a flattering, or the frowns of a threatening, world bear upon him, to weaken his faith, or abate his love; while the Arch-foe, ever on the watch for occasions, plies his wicked and hateful suggestions, to contaminate his mind. These are by no means contemptible adversaries: yet with all these the Christian *must* contend; against them he must keep up a constant antagonism, and that to the last; for here he has no resting-place. He will rest when he comes to his inheritance,—and then, brought off safely and happily, and more than a conqueror through Him that loved him, how sweet it will be to rest in heaven! His way thither may be rough: it cannot be long; and it will usher him into a repose, the blessedness of which will infinitely more than counterbalance all the toils and contests he endured in his progress to it. Anticipating this happy issue, he may well go on his way rejoicing, and sing as he goes,—

"My rest is in heaven, my rest is not here;
Then why should I murmur, when trials are near?
Be hushed, my dark spirit! the worst that can come
But shortens thy journey, and hastens thee home.
It is not for me to be seeking my bliss,
And building my hopes in a region like this:
I look for a City which hands have not piled;
I pant for a Country by sin undefiled."

2. We are permitted to see this inheritance under the figure of a *Paradise*. It is styled "the Paradise of God,"—a region of fragrance, of beauty, and of perfect enjoyment. In the midst of it grows the "tree of life," of which the possessor of the heavenly inheritance is permitted to eat. Blessed privilege! This tree is possessed of qualities peculiar to itself. Its fruit is highly nutritive; it even confers immortality on its happy partaker, and its leaves are medicinal. Under its shade the nations of the redeemed repose in safety, health, and uninterrupted felicity. It is declared of this Paradise, that "no more curse shall be there." No lurking tempter shall be found there; for there no tempter can ever gain an entrance. There no fear of future expulsion can arise; perpetual possession is secured. It is a region of incorruptible purity and holiness; and therefore its peace can never be marred. There every countenance beams with health; and every heart swells with joy. There nothing destructive, nothing mischievous, nothing grievous, can ever occur. The promise will then be fulfilled, "The ransomed of

the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away!"

3. Again, by the aid of Revelation, we discover this inheritance under the figure of a *City*. It is described, in the glowing language of the apostle John, as "the holy city, new Jerusalem, that came down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband." Old Jerusalem was itself a magnificent city, the chief city of God's ancient people; but this, the new, the purified, the spiritual Jerusalem, is incomparable for grandeur, beauty, and holiness. The Apostle has given us, in the two last chapters of his Apocalypse, a representation of this glorious city, which, for richness, and sublimity of expression, no descriptive piece in any language, prosaic or poetical, has been found to equal. No emblem of beauty and elegance could perhaps be more happily chosen, than that of a Bride in her nuptial attire. On that occasion, above all others, she employs the utmost skill and pains to set her charms off to the best advantage; accordingly, the City is represented as thus adorned. There is in the Apostle's description a combination of all that is rich, and beautiful, and brilliant, and, in fine, of whatever is calculated to excite our admiration, and a desire to behold, and to dwell in it. The very appellations given it are expressive of uncommon

magnificence.—It is called the City of the Great King—the City of the Lord of Hosts—the Tabernacle of God. No other city can claim such designations as these. The building of its wall is of jasper; the foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones; the streets are paved with pure gold, transparent as glass; and each of its gates is one entire pearl. The light of the City is infinitely greater than what the sun or moon could give it; for "the glory of God doth lighten it; and the Lamb is the light thereof." And the light is perpetual; for there is no night there. The glory of God never ceases to shine there; and therefore the darkness and dreariness of night can have no place there.

Truly, glorious things are spoken of thee, O City of God! "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory!" No martial sound shall ever be heard within thee; nor shall thy walls shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots of war: a shout shall never be lifted up against thee; the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in thee, nor the voice of crying.—No, not a jarring note shall fall upon the ear; but "joy and gladness shall be found in thee, thanksgiving and the voice of melody; and there shall be heard the voice of the harpers harping with their harps."—The song of Moses,

the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, shall echo through thy streets. In this City, too, there are many mansions, for the accommodation of the blessed inhabitants,—all of them buildings of God, not made with hands, like the palaces of earthly monarchs, but of *eternal* durability, and every way worthy of the Divine Architect and Proprietor. In these delightful mansions, the heirs of this heavenly inheritance will find everything suited to their glorified state. Their great forerunner Jesus has entered within the veil, to make them ready for their reception. They were, indeed, destined for them from before the foundation of the world; but it was when Christ entered as their High Priest that he more officially and immediately put them in preparation for his people's coming, that they might be for ever with him, and behold his glory there. It is of him they hold these possessions. They are *his*, as the reward of his mediatorial work; and they are *their's* by the gift of his grace. "The glory," said he, in addressing his Father, "the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them;" and elsewhere, he says, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the City of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God."

4. This inheritance is represented to us also under

the figure of a *Kingdom*,—a Kingdom of such wide extent as to be without any definite boundary; and of wealth and power beyond conception. The Sovereign of this Kingdom is Jesus Christ, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, "who hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all." Here the King and the Kingdom are both eternal. "Of the increase of his government, and of his peace, there shall be no end. Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Christ is King of the whole universe. He possesses supreme power over all things natural and spiritual—over heaven, earth, and hell. His name is declared to be above every name; and that "at his name every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth." Of him the Father gave command in heaven, "And let all the angels of God worship him." On his head are many crowns; for all kingdoms are his, being just so many departments of his vast empire. All his crowns betoken supreme sovereignty; but there is one distinguished above all the rest, for the ineffably attractive beauty, brilliancy and gracefulness with which it shines, and the heavenly benignity it beams on all around.—This is his *Mediatorial Diadem;* and this he earned by the life of labour, suffering, and sorrow which he spent, and the death he endured, on our earth, in our nature, and for us sinners, to reconcile

us to God;—a work which none but he could accomplish. In this view of it, can we possibly calculate the richness and glory of such a crown? or say what its precise value might be?—No; it is not in any created intellect to estimate the amount of the Mediator's merits, or tell the glory, honour, and power adequate to reward the Son of God for the achievement of redemption. Well may every creature in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, unite to ascribe in the highest "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

How transcendent is the majesty of the Christian's Redeemer! Yet to this majesty the humblest believer claims a near relation. With him whose name is above every name he is connected, not merely as a subject with his sovereign, but even as a younger brother with an elder—as a joint-heir with him of the glories of the heavenly world. "To him that overcometh," says the Redeemer, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne." What a privilege for the Christian, to have such a promise, from such a quarter! The lively hope which such a promise inspires will never fail him. It is not founded on himself, or on any fancied wisdom, strength, or righteousness of his own; for then it would prove but a baseless fabric, destined to be destroyed by the first temptation, and to perish in utter ruin and confusion. It rests on Christ, to

whom he has fled for refuge, as to the Rock of Ages, for salvation. To this lively hope he is said to be "begotten again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead." As sure, therefore, as he who died for him rose again, and liveth for evermore, so surely will the kingdom of glory, the promised inheritance, be his.

In this Kingdom, too, the glorified Christian will himself receive a crown. On earth he may have been one of the poorest, the humblest, the most despised among men; but he was, all the while, an heir to a crown,—a crown of infinitely more value than any that ever adorned the brow of an earthly potentate. All earthly crowns, of whatever material, are corruptible; this is incorruptible. Those are uncertain possessions, being frequently torn by violence from one head, to be set upon another; this is held by an everlasting tenure, and can never be displaced. Hence it is called, by way of eminence, a "crown of life." "Be thou faithful unto death," says the Saviour, "and I will give thee a *crown of life.*" In reference also to the character of those to whom it shall be awarded, it is called a "crown of righteousness;" for they are all made righteous in the righteousness of Christ. Hear the testimony of the Apostle: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a *crown of righteousness*, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." O, if the glittering diadems of this perishing world excite the cupidity, and inflame the ambition of earthly-

minded mortals, so that they are ready to "wade through slaughter" to obtain them, how should the aspirant to a crown of life labour, strive, contend, until it be won! He is required to be "faithful unto death,"—clearly an agonistical expression, intimating that every power of endurance and of action is to be put forth, a warfare accomplished, and resistance to sin made, if needful, even unto death, ere he can receive the prize. But the prize is certain. Let him under no circumstances yield to fear; nor give his enemy advantage over him, by "casting away his confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." The needful strength, and the needful armour, are provided of God; and—

> "The feeble saint
> Shall win the day,
> Tho' death and hell
> Obstruct the way."

Again, it is essential to man's happiness that he be placed in society. In the kingdom of glory, the social principle is fully and freely acted upon. The saint, in possession of his heavenly inheritance, will enjoy a society congenial with his glorified state. It will consist of the innumerable company of angels, in all their gradations of thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, angels and arch-angels, seraphim and cherubim; multitudes also of those who, like himself, had "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the

Lamb,"—"multitudes whom no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues;" and, above all, and what constitutes the essential blessedness of this inheritance—the KING OF GLORY himself. We know but little of the economy of heaven; but we may gather, from what is revealed, that there will be perpetual intercourse between the holy angels and the saints in light, for mutual increase in knowledge, wisdom, and enjoyment. It is not to be imagined that those benevolent spirits, who ministered to the heirs of glory while upon earth, will, on their coming to their inheritance, cease to recognise them. They had ever taken a deep interest in their spiritual progress. Their sympathies and services were ever ready to assist, according to their commission, and, in their own mysterious way, by solacing, counselling, and encouraging them, in times of sorrow and conflict. Christ's ransomed people were ever the objects of their intense regard,—their special charge, whose ultimate bliss and elevation they contemplated with peculiar delight as an accession to their own. And now, that they are arrived at their home, and become fellow-celestials with themselves, how will they rejoice to exchange their ministerings in sadness, sickness, and temptations, for congratulatory welcomes, and acclamations of praise! It is, moreover, their kind office to convey the souls of the saints, at their emancipation from the body, to their bright inheritance in heaven.

They cannot, therefore, fail to continue the mutual intercourse there, and that on more intimate and familiar terms than before. Thus the principalities and powers in heavenly places will form, with the saints, one great and happy assembly, participating the same joys and the same employments, before the unveiled presence of their common Lord. Sweet will be the converse carried on between them. Themes high and holy, and increasing for ever in interest, will not be wanting, through the countless ages of eternity. The manifold wisdom of God, in the works of his hand, in the plans of his universal government, and, above all, in his accomplishment of human redemption, will afford perpetual matter for study, for mutual converse, and for united praise. How sublime the thought! There will be in heaven an inexhaustible supply of topics, to exercise the intellect, the affections, and the conversation of the inhabitants there, for eternity! But wonderful as this fact appears, and difficult as it is for us to form an adequate conception of it, it would be still more wonderful, and more difficult to conceive, how there could ever cease to be topics to interest and engage the faculties of the heavenly intelligences. The one great subject of God's dealings with fallen man; the wonderful display of his wisdom, love, and mercy, in the appointment of his Son Jesus Christ to recover him; and the glory of God, in the restoration of the apostate race thereby secured, will be of

itself an everlasting theme, the wonders of which will be "for ever telling, yet untold." This will undoubtedly be made the favourite topic with both orders, angels and saints; for we are assured that the angelic hosts join with the redeemed in the loud song, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!"

But, what is unmeasurably more than all this, the glorified saint, as we have already observed, will enjoy the society of the KING, the LORD OF GLORY himself. The will of Christ expressed in his prayer, before he suffered, will then be fulfilled,—those whom the Father gave him will be with him where he is, and will behold his glory. On earth, the Christian did, in his best moments, commune with his Lord in spirit. There were occasions when, faith being strong, and love glowing warmly in his bosom, the Saviour has, as it were, come into his soul, and blessed him with heavenly communications, making good his gracious promise, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." These were moments of high and profitable enjoyment. The love of God shed abroad in his heart has rapt him out of the things of flesh and sense; his relish for things divine has been powerfully stimulated, and he has cried, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there

is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" But these seasons were comparatively rare, and of short duration. They were, indeed, refreshing foretastes of the heavenly feast; but they were quickly over. On some such gracious moment as this, David said, "Lord! by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong;" but was presently forced to add, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Peter was very happy on the holy mount with his transfigured Lord, and talked of building tabernacles there to perpetuate his happiness; but he was soon conducted down again, to prosecute the Christian warfare. These communings with God—these glimpses of glory, how brief they are, and how far between! The infirmities of the flesh, and the influence of earthly things, frequently disturb and break up the happiest seasons of the Christian here. But, in heaven, when he has realized his bright inheritance, he will be admitted far above the region of every disturbing force, to gaze on the adorable countenance of him who fills the throne, and experience the full meaning of that rapturous exclamation, "In thy presence there is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore!" What elevation! what dignity! what blessedness! Then is the tabernacle of God with men, and he dwells with them! He is even represented in the gracious attitude of

"feeding them, and leading them unto living fountains of waters; and wiping away all tears from their eyes!"

Is such, O Christian! the inheritance laid up for thee in heaven? Yes, and infinitely more than our imagination can reach. Dwell upon the theme as long as thou mayest, and raise and widen thy thoughts with the utmost effort of thy mind, thou wilt still come so far short of the reality, that, when thou art put in possession, thou wilt be amazed at the overflowing fulness and exceeding glory that will then burst upon thee! It must be so; for thy finite capacity cannot take in the things prepared for thy future enjoyment. If they shall be upon a scale suited to the majesty and riches of the Great King, and intended as a reward worthy of the achievements and the blood of the Redeemer, O how inconceivable must be the exceeding and eternal weight of glory destined for his people! Looking, then, for an inheritance such as this, strive to live in a style that shall be in keeping with it. Such lofty expectations ought to raise the tone of thy feeling, thy conversation, thy conduct, above the highest and most boasted pursuits of time. Stoop not to the vanities, follow not the maxims, of a perishing world. Aim constantly at a perfect meetness for this inheritance, by cultivating all holy habits, and true godliness. But remember this is unattainable by thy own wisdom —by thy own might. Seek the unerring guidance

and all-sufficient aid of the Holy Spirit, by whom alone the life of God in the soul can be sustained in health and vigour, and through whom thou wilt be guarded from error, kept from falling, and enabled to go from strength to strength, until, in due time, "an entrance shall be ministered to thee abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

II. The inheritance reserved for the Christian is distinguished for its PURITY,—it is *undefiled*. Defilement, alas! is the character of the world, and all worldly possessions. Sin has defiled them. Estranged from God, the creature man turned round, and marred everything within his reach. The taste and relish of his soul became gross, his desires polluted, and his will distorted; so that what else would have ministered to his happiness he has perversely turned into occasions and instruments of sin, making them sources of disappointment and vexation to himself. Alas! what have we here that does not tell of man's defiled and fallen state? Does not the whole creation groan and travail together? and why, but because burdened with the sins and pollutions of apostate man? We carry, as it were, a leprosy within and upon ourselves; and whatever we come in contact with is consequently infected. Sin mingles with all our doings, whether in our *individual* or *collective* capacity. Our inmost thoughts, our aims and objects,

our language, our practice, our pursuits in life, let them be what they may, whether manual or mental, are all tainted with sin. This is a sad condition of things; and the more humbling it is, when we advert to the fact, that it is all directly traceable to the uncleanness of the human heart. Of this heart a prophet testifies, that it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and seeing that out of it are the issues of life, it follows that they are all infected with impurity. The way of man, therefore,—of unregenerate man, "is froward and strange,"—crooked, and opposed to holiness and truth. While he is in a state of unbelief, and estrangement from the source of purity, to him there is nothing pure; his very mind and conscience are defiled. The light that is in him is darkness; and great is that darkness. His whole moral nature is enthralled under sin; and purity and truth are shut out. Such is the world that lieth in wickedness.

Therefore the Christian, enlightened and purified by the Spirit of God, finds nothing here congenial with his mind and state. The world and he are not on friendly terms; for "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." He is, consequently, never at home with any earthly possession. It is sure to bring with it some temptation, some excitement to envy, grief, or unholy strife. Has he wealth? how apt is it to incline his heart to luxury, or covetousness! Is he in power? then is pride busily seeking

to insinuate itself into his heart. Has he extensive influence? how is he tempted to lord it over others! Does he hold a place in the literary and scientific world? how ready is the love of fame to take possession of his soul, and tempt him to forget the higher objects to which he is committed! In fine, he can put his hand to nothing here, he can see nothing in the hands of others, free from the stain of sin,—nothing that can promise him entire safety and satisfaction in the using. Let him look at "all the works that are done under the sun," and he will be forced to cry, with the Preacher, "Behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit!" There is no inheritance for him on earth that is pure, that is undefiled.

It is otherwise with the inheritance in heaven. It is altogether stainless. In whatever aspect it be viewed, purity is presented. Pure and spotless is the character of him who procured it; pure and spotless the service performed of which it is the reward; pure and spotless the principle on which he awards it to believers; pure is the heaven in which it is reserved; there will be no admission for defilement there; and pure and spotless are all the inheritors, for they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Pure will be every sentiment, every conception of the mind, in that blissful abode; for there every communication of the Deity will come *immediate* to every inhabitant, and be caught as a sunbeam at its first

darting from its source. There knowledge will be pure and complete; for the saints in glory "will know, even as they are known." There all social intercourse and converse will be pure; for no element of impurity can taint a thought or a wish there,—no earthly stain will ever be found amongst them. "There shall in no wise enter into that place anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

III. This heavenly inheritance is IMMUTABLE,—it *fadeth not away*,—it *withereth not*,—it *decayeth not;*—it is incapable of deterioration. We mean not that there will be entire, absolute uniformity. The happy state will be ever increasing, without the possibility of diminution. There will be fulness that shall never know deficiency—a glory that shall never be dimmed. This inheritance is a Rest never to be broken by toil or fatigue. Nothing from without can assail, or attempt to ruffle the serenity of enjoyment,—nothing to interrupt the stream of bliss that flows for ever there; and there is nothing in its own nature liable to exhaustion, or to change. When he enters on the possession of this inheritance, the glorified Christian shall no longer witness the alternation of day and night. The sun and the moon are not needed there; for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. There, duration will no more be reckoned by

months, and years, and ages; but a happy and delighted existence will flow on, eternal and unchangeable as the being of the Almighty himself. There, life, in the truest and sublimest sense, will be the portion of the saint. Death will be no longer known. Disease and pain will be no more heard of; but health, vigour, and beauty will bloom in unfading, unalterable freshness. It is a Paradise, in which grow and flourish the tree of life, and the amaranth—

> "That flowers aloft, shading the fount of life;
> And where the River of Bliss, thro' midst of heaven,
> Rolls o'er Elysian flowers her amber stream."

There, the redeemed begin a course of happiness and glory, that shall run on enlarging and widening in endless duration. There, all will be unmingled gladness, without the fear of a rebuke, or the possibility of a cloud to obscure their prospect, or of any adverse power to forbid their joys; for they inherit all under the guarantee and sanction of him "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

What a contrast does all this present to the Christian's present state,—the state not inaptly called his *militant* state. Contrasts are often instructive; let us ponder this for a while. Here, the Christian is a combatant; there, he is a conqueror, and "more than a conqueror, through him that loved him." His change of condition and experience will then, indeed, be great; but it will be

a change once for all. Here, he is encompassed with infirmities; there, glorified in body and in mind, he will exult in the unfettered energies of both, and to weariness and weakness he will be liable no more. Here, the flesh, dull, slow, and sluggish in its nature, hangs as a weight upon the soul, retarding its progress, and checking its eagle-flights towards heaven; there, body and soul will be mutual aids in every heavenly attainment. Here, he has not only to lament the sources within himself of sorrow, vexation, and distress, but to meet them from without, in the case not merely of adversaries, who oppose him, but even of friends, who suffer like himself; there, no adversary can live, and every friend, every companion, is a partner in bliss. Here, he is subject, it may be, to sudden and distressful vicissitudes in his own lot, and often he is pained to behold those involved in them who stand in near and dear relation to him in life; there, no unwelcome vicissitude, nor momentary intermission of his happiness, will ever be felt, "for the former things are passed away."

But, while we are drawing this contrast, we do not presume to give a *minute* description of the Christian's heavenly inheritance. In its blessedness and glory are things unutterable, passing all created power to detail. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," says the beloved disciple, who enjoyed a larger and nearer acquaintance with this subject than most other Christians; and what after

him shall *we* say? What, but that "such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it?" Let us, then, speak with caution and brevity, lest we prove guilty of "darkening counsel by words without knowledge." We are not, however, left here in total ignorance. The Holy Spirit has condescended to reveal some portions, sufficiently beautiful and interesting to attract our grateful attention. Therefore, though we have neither minds nor tongues adequate "to the height of this great argument," it is our duty to meditate on the things that are revealed, and to speak of them as things belonging to us and our children,—not merely that our imagination may be regaled, but that our hearts may be improved, and our souls excited to more ardent aspirations after meetness for the glorious realities.

Think of the exaltation of nature which the faithful Christian is entitled to expect. It will be purified—made perfect, like that of the holy angels. Of this he is assured. What is more, he will belong to an order of beings in the kingdom of glory peculiarly blessed and honoured. He will be one of the great multitude whom no man can number, worshipping before the throne, each of them clothed in a body fashioned like unto the glorious body of him whom they adore. They have all been redeemed by him from sin and death, cleansed in his blood, and dressed in his righteousness; therefore are they greatly beloved. They are brought to

this heavenly inheritance through a dispensation of grace so wonderful, that it forms a study for the angels themselves. And how grand an idea of the distinction conferred on the saints in heaven is derived from the fact, that they are privileged with a resemblance to the Lord of all! He is, indeed, infinitely raised above them in glory; but while, with eyes purified and fitted to celestial objects, they gaze on his ineffable glory, they will be ever gaining assimilation to him, and consequently ever increasing in beauty, grandeur, and happiness. Unspeakable exaltation! And, O, how vast the blessedness of being thus made partakers of the Divine nature—of being conscious of possessing attributes similar to those of Deity himself,—knowledge, righteousness, and holiness!—and thus displaying before the intelligent universe, in their twofold nature, a reflection more and more luminous of Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person!

We do not, however, mean, by what we have hitherto said, that the heavenly inheritance places the glorified saint in a state of *inactive* pleasure—of merely *quiescent* enjoyment. No, much of his blessedness will be made up of *activities*. There will be no such class of subjects in the kingdom of heaven as mere *spectators*, or *receivers;* they will all be *actors*, and *doers* also. That there are glories to be beheld, and pleasures to be received, in that kingdom, beyond all human conception

great and varied, is a truth in which we greatly rejoice; but of those pleasures a large proportion will have their source in action.

We would remark, then, that the great, the constant, employment of saints in possession of the inheritance in heaven is *to glorify God.* This is the grand end of creation,—the end to be promoted through time, and through eternity. "The Lord hath made all things for himself;" and the language of the worshippers above is to that effect: "Thou, Lord, hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." The glory of God is necessarily the greatest and the best object to be for ever promoted throughout his universe; and accordingly the very happiness of the saints above is identified with it. In "serving him day and night in his temple," and in ascribing "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb," they create and enhance the blessedness of their own heavenly state.

1. They will glorify God *in the study of his works.* We are not sufficiently acquainted with the mode of study in heaven to describe it distinctly; but that this will be part of the heavenly employment, we can have no doubt; for knowledge is the food of the mind of man, and, so long as it is in a healthy state, it hungers and thirsts after it. Study is the labour required to obtain that food. Here, the labour itself is a pleasure.

The glorified saints, as their pure, unfettered minds range over the works of the Creator, expanding and varying continually before them, are ever imbibing fresh delight. Surveying the sublime productions of the wisdom and the power of him whose unmerited grace brought them into these blissful and exalted regions, they are conscious of increasing admiration and love, while they more and more ardently desire to enjoy intercourse with him, as the Author of all, and the Source of all their blessedness.

2. They will glorify God *by learning his character from his works and ways.* As they gaze upon the vastness and variety of the objects that surround them, and admire the beauties and sublimities that smile and swell before them, they perceive the mind as well as the hand of the Maker, in their perfect symmetry and mutual adaptations; and contemplating, with their quick and keen perceptions, the astonishing order, and harmony of arrangement and government, everywhere prevailing, they behold everywhere the all-wise God and the benevolent Father. Inspired with wonder, reverence, and love united, they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying, "Great and manifold are thy works, Lord God Almighty! just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!"

3. They will glorify God *by maintaining a friendly fellowship with the holy angels and their brethren of*

the redeemed in heaven. Love is the ruling principle in every celestial bosom; and friendship, a modification of love, reigns unalloyed, unrestricted there. Nothing selfish, nothing unamiable, is known among the blessed inhabitants. There, each loves his neighbour as himself; and whatever good one can do for another, he does it cordially, with love unfeigned. Manifold, and mutually delightful and edifying, are the themes on which they hold converse; but that which will no doubt run through all the rest, as the favourite, the most interesting, the soul-engrossing, topic, will be the economy of grace, in God's reconciling, through his Son Jesus Christ, a fallen world to himself. O! what transporting tales will one and another have to tell to listening groups of the love of Christ, of the work he did, and of the death he died for them! of the mercy which rescued them from sin and Satan; of the Holy Spirit's enlightening, guiding, and protecting care; and of the thousand manifestations of Divine tenderness, forbearance, and forgiveness, through all their course on earth, till they reached the heavenly kingdom!— Over them, all the while, will be found hanging, with deep, inquiring attention, "the principalities and powers in heavenly places, and learning, from the church, the manifold wisdom of God!" Of these communications they will never tire. New points will ever occur on which to expatiate. Fresh emotions will be ever rising to call for utterance.

They will feel that they need an eternity to carry on the delightful task.

In that happy place, there will also be a recognition of friends and relatives known and loved on earth. There, husbands and wives, who were equally the ransomed of Christ, will be re-united, —not in that same capacity, but in love and attachment purer, more exalted, than could ever exist before, and that immortal. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, all previously prepared for the kingdom, will be restored to each other, to be separated no more for ever; but to live through a never-ending stream of ages, more and more endeared to each other as they increase in moral beauty, worth, and excellence. There, faithful pastors will recognise the children whom God had given them, as the seals of their ministry, while they laboured on earth. How greatly will it contribute to their mutual happiness, thus to meet in the mansions of bliss;—the one party, to greet, with delighted gratulations, the trophies of grace won to the Saviour through their instrumentality, and now standing in his presence, their "joy and crown of rejoicing;"—the others, on their part, to recount, with grateful emotions, to their former pastors, the merciful leadings of God, and the gracious impressions of his Holy Spirit, which rendered their ministrations and labours of love effectual to their conversion and preparation for glory. Such will be the happiness of the heavenly

state; while they will universally acknowledge the whole to be derived from, and held in, their Lord: for it is only in *his* presence that there is fulness of joy; it is at *his* right hand that there are pleasures for evermore.—They enjoy God in all, and all in God.

And now, Christian, if thou art anticipating an inheritance of this description, thou wilt surely be impressed with a deep feeling, not only of gratitude for such a rich provision, but of imperative obligation to cultivate purity of heart and life. This inheritance is reserved in heaven for them only who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Thou art required to be holy, as God is holy; and pure, as he is pure. This, indeed, is not more a Divine requirement, than it is a necessity in the nature of things. The pure only can live in a region of purity; for "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" Thou couldst have no enjoyment in such a region, —nay, thou wouldst be miserable there, without previous meetness. The rude, unpolished boor finds nothing more insupportably irksome, than to be placed, for a season, in the society of the refined and elegant. · With people of such a class he cannot associate. Neither his mental nor corporal faculties are congenial with their's; and, impatient of his painful position, he is not happy

till released from it. So would the soul, unwashed from sin, and unholy, be altogether wretched in the society of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. Let this conviction, then, be ever present with thee,—the pure alone can inhabit purity. If thou art cherishing the hope of the beatific vision, the hope of seeing Christ as he is in his kingdom, remember what, in such a case, is expected of thee,—"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Yes; fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, implies a special fitness for an approach so near, for a blessedness so exalted. There must be a likeness to the Saviour begun *now*, to be *then* carried on and increased. And it is to this thou art called. "This," says the Apostle, "is the will of God, even our sanctification;" and God "hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." We have been speaking of the purity, beauty, and grandeur of heaven; and what is it, but to speak of the purity, beauty, and grandeur of God? What is it but God himself? He is purity—he is beauty—he is grandeur! But if to draw near to him, to live with him, there must be assimilation—a participation of his nature, how is this wonderful attainment to be made? Not by any effort of thine own; for "though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is

marked before me, saith the Lord God." Moral pollution demands a laver thou canst not furnish, and an agency of power and authority to which nothing in God's creation can pretend. Nothing less than Divine energy can produce such an effect. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is his office to apply the blood of sprinkling to the conscience; it is his to guide into all truth, and to present with power to the mind the various motives to a holy life with which the Gospel abounds; it is his to purify the affections, and to raise them to things above; and all the graces of the Christian character are the fruits of the Spirit. It is for thee to make a diligent use of all appointed means; to study the mind and will of the Spirit from his own word; and to conduct that study with an honest purpose of obedience. Count it not enough to read, hear, and understand the word. If it have its proper influence upon thee, thou wilt not be content till thou art made to feel, and to do its bidding. To this end, a watchful and prayerful habit of mind is indispensable. And, if thou wouldst enjoy spiritual health, if thou wouldst possess a full assurance of thy title to the heavenly inheritance, labour to be *eminently* pious. To be so, thou must be found with "thy loins girded about, and thy light burning." Let this be thy constant attitude, reckoning that *active, industrious,* piety alone is *eminent* piety; and seeking to live under the im-

pression, that nothing less than this is demanded for the prosperity of thy own soul, and for the glory of thy Lord, in the advancement of his cause in the world. These things do with all diligence, but still under a deep conviction that the special influences of the Spirit are essentially needful to make thy doings available. Implore, then, the aid of this Divine Agent. Christ assures thee that the Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him; and, "*All* things," says he, "whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."—"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

LECTURE VI.

SECURITIES.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—Rom. viii. 32.

"And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."—John vi. 39.

It is our usual practice, in transactions with each other on the subject of property, to secure its possession to the rightful claimant by such satisfactory deeds and documents as the case may require. When these are wanting, we all know how apt he is to be deprived of his right, through the cupidity of others, who take advantage of the consequent uncertainty. Hence the many fierce disputes and vexatious litigations that distort the face of society, and chase peace and good brotherhood away from us. On such occasions, we too often see the all-engrossing interest that men take in securing earthly possessions most signally exemplified. Witness the courts of law,—how they are crowded with counsellors and solicitors, busily employed upon their briefs and parchments, with their numerous clients, each,

in countenance and attitude, expressing an eagerness and anxiety, as if the fate of the world hung upon the issue of his single cause. And, then, at their several dwellings, you may observe them discussing, with all the warmth and vehemence of men on a question of life and death, the various points involved in the disputed case. This is human nature: nor do we profess to know any class of men who are wholly exempt from the influence of that selfish passion. But, in whatever degree these unlovely spectacles may be exhibited among us, they cannot but suggest to the pious Christian, that there are treasures to be pursued and obtained infinitely more valuable, than anything for which the worldling struggles with his fellow-man. The Christian may, or may not, have pretensions to earthly possessions: if he have, he may be harassed with the covetous and unjustifiable attempts of others to defraud him of his rightful property; but, while he maintains his own claim with becoming firmness, he will not suffer things earthly and temporal so to interfere as to endanger his interest in things heavenly and eternal. That interest, in his estimation, far outweighs every other concern. It is a *paramount* interest. He will follow Paul's advice, and "rather take wrong, and suffer himself to be defrauded" of acres of land, than, by imbibing the spirit of the world, lose the clear, the soul-cheering prospect of his portion in the love of God. To be assured of such a treasure, to examine and rejoice in the Secu-

rities which the word of God, the great Charter of his spiritual Privileges, so fully records, for the establishment of his faith, and the confirmation of his hope, is to him among the sweetest employments of mind he can indulge in his present existence. He can, indeed, have no source more direct than this, whether of pleasure or profit. Imagine a youth long and far from home. He is now on his way thither; but has various tracts of sea and land to pass, ere he can reach it. These are, on many occasions, trying and dangerous, from storms and tempests at one time, and the rude treatment of strangers at another. In the meanwhile, frequent epistles are brought to his hand from his father, kindly assuring him of his parental love, urging him to perseverance by every possible encouragement, and promising him, on his arrival, a cordial welcome from every branch of the household. These epistles contain, at the same time, many useful directions how he may make a safe progress to his journey's end. Ah! none but himself can tell with what delightful emotions he peruses and reperuses these dear testimonials of his father's regard; and also with what advantage he ponders the admonitions given him, as to the conduct of his way! Such are the Christian's circumstances, on his way to his heavenly home. Dangers and difficulties beset him; trials many and bitter has he to endure; while hosts of adversaries to his soul are often in array against him. None of these are permitted to

overcome or enthral him; yet, it must be confessed, that they have not seldom the effect of depressing his spirits, and casting a gloom over his prospects. Deeply sensible of his own imperfections, of his want of that conformity to the image of his Saviour which his soul desires to attain, he is often tempted to fear he is none of his. The view of his own unholy nature scares him from daring to appropriate the privileges of the pious Christian. He deems himself all unworthy of the precious promises, and cannot look to inherit the blessedness and glory to which they point the believer's hopes. It is thus he afflicts his soul, while he looks only on himself. But when, with due humility and earnest prayer, he betakes himself to the oracles of truth, and the Holy Spirit opens afresh to his faith the all-sufficiency of Christ in his stead, how cheering, how encouraging to his heart are the gracious communications! A new and fuller perception of the truth, that "all things are his," because he is Christ's, and Christ is God's, breaks upon his mind, and he goes on his way rejoicing. The word of God, rightly understood, dissipates his fears, and resolves his doubts. This document he prizes, as his Lord's statute-book, whence he is to receive the law; his warrant of confidence in his expectation of every good and every perfect gift; and as the sword which the Spirit puts into his hand wherewith to fight his way to the kingdom of heaven. This also he uses as "a lamp unto his

feet, and a light unto his path;" and of this Divine word he says, with the Psalmist, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory!"

We have been inviting the Christian to contemplate his great and precious Privileges. According to the oracles of God have we endeavoured to delineate them. It has been seen, we trust, that we have had a "Thus saith the Lord" for whatever we advanced respecting them: and now, if it be demanded whether any Securities are to be had, on which the people of God may rely for their possessing and enjoying the Privileges described; and if so, where they are to be found?—we reply, that such Securities are at hand,—Securities substantial and satisfactory, that cannot be shaken; and they are contained in the same Sacred Records to which we have been referring. Some of them we shall now produce. The people of God, then, or Christians, are secured in the possession and enjoyment of their spiritual Privileges by the fact that—

I. THEY ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION;

II. THEY ARE THE GIFT OF THE FATHER TO THE SON;

III. THEY ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE;

IV. THEY HAVE DIRECT ASSURANCES ADDRESSED TO THEMSELVES, OR SPOKEN OF THEM, IN GOD'S WORD.

I. THEY ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION.

Every individual Christian was the object of God's electing love before the world began. This wonderful distinction he owes, not to any foreseen excellence in him, but to an act of grace—sovereign grace, on the part of God. In ascribing his election to the sovereignty of God, we assign it an origin beyond which it cannot be carried. While we announce this doctrine, we come, I confess, on delicate ground; we approach a question involved in difficulties beyond our ability to remove. It has been repeatedly subjected to the study of men second to none among us for strength and penetration of mind, and patience of investigation; and they have left it nearly as they found it, plainly for this reason,—it is among the secret things that belong to God, and not to us. It is one of an order of truths which are addressed not so much to our understanding as to our faith. That God has reasons, wise as well as benevolent, for his procedure in electing, and not electing, we cannot doubt. We are bound to believe this from what we know of his character. "Just and true are *all* his ways. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." But his reasons he has not revealed; nor have we, nor an angel, any right to demand of him an account of his doings, which he has been pleased to withhold. For myself, I am fully satisfied, that were our understandings adequate to comprehend the matter, we should see his decisions, in

every aspect of them, to be perfectly right; that, in the exercise of infinite wisdom and goodness united, the Almighty has seen meet to leave us in ignorance here; and that we ought humbly and thankfully to acquiesce in the measure of communication afforded us,—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." To this I would take leave to add, that not only has Paul shown us how he would have us meet a pertinacious inquirer on this question, when he says, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" but our Lord himself has gathered up the argument, and closed it with those memorable words, "Even so, Father! for so it seemed good in thy sight!"—Does it become us to say more?

The election of the saints, in the counsels of God, from all eternity, is a doctrine clearly taught us in Scripture. We there learn that it embraces a countless number of our fallen race; and that its design is the glory of God, in their ultimate sanctification and possession of eternal life. Paul expressly says, "He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." And elsewhere, he tells us, that "whom God had predestinated," or *elected*, "them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified;" where the Apostle uses the perfect, or past, for the future tense, inti-

mating that the certainty and speed with which these glorious results shall be effected are such that they may be said to be already done.—With God, to determine, and to do, are the same thing. From this passage of Scripture, we are entitled to the triumphant assurance, that the soul once chosen in Christ will be certainly brought, through all the stages of spiritual experience required—through the enjoyment of the Privileges belonging to his character, to their consummation in glory. To that soul will the Holy Spirit present the things of Christ; and, though dead in trespasses and sins, it shall be quickened through his grace and energy,—it will be pardoned—purified—received into the adoption of children, and finally seated in the possession of the inheritance reserved for such happy souls in heaven. This is a Security not to be controverted. Jehovah, having set his love upon the Christian, can never lose sight of him. He well knows all and every one of his saints, and will deal with them according to the good purpose of his will. His purposes cannot be set aside by any power in heaven, earth, or hell. May we not, then, exclaim, in the spirit of the Apostle, "Who shall interpose to defeat the hopes of God's elect? it is God who has chosen them in his Son Jesus Christ; and there is no creature that shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord."

Consider, Christian, the great truth of which

we are speaking. It suggests various, and highly useful, reflections. A special, and very prominent instruction to be drawn from it is that of *humility*. It casts down the pride of man. It teaches the sinner that, if he obtain salvation, all boasting on his part is wholly excluded. He has no part even in its origination. At this humbling doctrine many stumble. A lesson so mortifying to their natural love of self-glory they refuse to learn. The Scriptures, however, uniformly ascribe all the glory in this question to God: proud man dares to dispute it, and puts in his own claim. At one time, we shall find him denying this special and personal election to salvation altogether, contending that election in Scripture refers only to the *external means*, and not to actual salvation; at another, we have him admitting the doctrine of special election, as denoting the enjoyment of personal and saving Privileges, but maintaining that it is founded on the Divine foreknowledge of faith and holiness in the characters of men, and is therefore *conditional*. It may be easily shown that, in either case, the sentiment is at utter variance with the word of God. A brief reference to certain passages must suffice.

The apostle Paul, addressing himself to the Thessalonian Christians, says, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath, from the beginning, *chosen you to salvation*, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." If

these words are to be allowed their genuine meaning, they will be found utterly subversive of the former opinion to which we have adverted. They very plainly assert the fact, that God had chosen the Thessalonian Christians to salvation properly so called,—not to external privileges, or the means of salvation only. Their election from the beginning was to a salvation for which they were actually put under preparation, through the sanctifying agency of the Holy Spirit, and the belief of the truth,—a salvation which he expresses in other words, in the verse immediately following, "The obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." The saints at Thessalonica were under training, so to speak, by the Spirit, through faith in Christ Jesus, to that consummation of happiness and glory to which the eternal purpose of grace had appointed them: and this purpose provided for and secured all subsequent means and privileges for the ultimate object—their effectual calling;—their justification;—their progress in holiness;—and their complete salvation. As to the latter sentiment, making God's foreknowledge of subsequent faith and holiness the foundation of their election, it is no less broadly opposed to the truth of God. The language of the Apostle, in a text already quoted, is explicit on the subject. "He hath chosen us," says he, "before the foundation of the world,"—and why? because he foresaw our faith and holiness of character?—No; but for this express purpose, "that we should

be holy, and without blame before him." To the same purpose he says, in his Epistle to the Romans, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of his Son.*" Holiness, therefore, follows as the *consequence*, and not the *cause*, of election. No form of words can more plainly announce that proposition. The Divine choice from before the foundation of the world is clearly the producing cause of subsequent conformity to the image of Christ. The cause is from eternity; the effect is in time. God does indeed foresee the faith, repentance, and holiness, of his chosen people; but he foresees them in that people, because he has chosen them to eternal life through those graces, by which they are to glorify him. It is nowhere said, nor can it be said, without absurdity, that he foresees any saving principles in the characters of men, on whom he had not previously determined to bestow them; and assuredly the gifts and graces connected with salvation will be possessed by none but those who are predestinated, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things, after the counsel of his own will.

We have thus seen that election springs from the sovereign mercy of God. He is, in this matter, self-moved, knowing no influence out of his own mind; for "Who hath enjoined him his way?" or who hath been his counsellor? He could have none to enjoin or counsel him; for his decrees were passed before any creature had a being. The

glory, therefore, of the scheme of salvation, and of appointing any of the guilty race to obtain it, is exclusively his. In doing so, he exercises a prerogative belonging unquestionably to Him. He has a right to do whatever he pleases, consistently with justice and equity. But while it would be daring impiety to allege anything against the Divine procedure, as opposed to what is just and right, we say he may do, and he actually does, more than strict justice demands of him, in the way of mercy to those whom he has chosen. In choosing any to life, where all had deserved death, he displayed a benevolence to which none of them had any claim. It was, in their case, a mercy altogether gratuitous. It was fulfilling towards them "the good pleasure of his will," or, as we have already expressed it, *the sovereignty of his mercy.* Hence we are entire debtors to the grace of God, for that wonderful scheme of salvation revealed in the Gospel; and in pursuance of which Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

But if this view of salvation casts down all human pride, and excludes boasting, it no less calls for our liveliest GRATITUDE. It calls for it the more powerfully, that it rests not on anything in man. Had it depended on aught that man can do to repair the breach of the law, or to atone for guilt, salvation would never have been heard of; for in becoming guilty, he became also helpless. The Almighty, though the offended party, saw this,

and had pity. But to find a remedy, neither man, nor any other creature, could afford the least assistance. When Jehovah resolved on saving, it was by a plan of wisdom, grace, and power solely and purely his own. "Of the people there was none with him—none to help—none to uphold; therefore *his own arm* brought him salvation." Truly "salvation belongeth unto the Lord." "He hath saved us," says the Apostle, and "called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." How thankful, then, ought we to be, that our salvation was not left dependent on any subsequent exhibition of human character—on any contingency which *we* could in any way create! Wisdom and goodness unite, in thus deciding the matter, to form for us a boon infinitely beyond all the service we can render, all the praise we shall ever be able to ascribe. Well may we rejoice in the contemplation of this truth. Our appointment to salvation is of the Lord; it is therefore *certain.* Let us duly appreciate our high calling, and live consistently with it; and we may be assured that the Divine appointment will be fulfilled. As if to banish fear, and establish our hearts in confidence, God himself points us to this truth, as to a Security, and declares, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

There is another point, however, arising out of

this subject, which it is important for us to consider. How could God, consistently with the principles of his moral government, allow any violators of his law to escape condign punishment? All mankind were involved in a state of guilt, and exposure to the penalties of a broken law. The law was "holy, just, and good." To that law they were amenable,—they disobeyed, and sinned against the Divine Legislator. His perfect justice, his undeviating righteousness, demanded the infliction of the punishment incurred. But God is merciful; and how is his mercy to be shown, if justice is to be satisfied, and righteousness maintained and honoured? His own infinite wisdom solved the difficulty; and, blessed be his name! the Gospel of Christ reveals the solution. It tells us of a Mediator adequate to the great purpose: and this brings us to observe, that the people of God are secured in the possession and enjoyment of their spiritual Privileges by the fact that they are themselves—

II. The Gift of the Father to his Son Jesus Christ.

In sovereign mercy, God appointed a countless multitude to everlasting life; but, to meet and satisfy the demands of law and justice, he so appointed them through a Mediator. He laid help for them on One that is mighty, even his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in him—in consideration of a covenant of redemption made with him—that they

are chosen. In this covenant, which was concluded from eternity, the Divine Son engaged to become a propitiation for sinners, fulfilling all righteousness in their room, and enduring their penalties. God the Father engaged that the fruit of his labours and sufferings should be the salvation of a numerous seed; that he should behold it as the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; that he should justify many; and, in fine, that he should have "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." The Saviour himself, alluding to this gift, says, in his address to the Father, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." They were the Father's as his creatures, and the objects of his electing love: they became the Son's by the gift of the Father, to be in due time redeemed by him, and presented faultless before the presence of his glory. The date of their election by the Father, and of their consignment to the Son, is the same—from eternity: the work to be done *for* them, and *in* them, was to take place in time. Thus they are dear to both. The Father loves them, as the children of his adoption, to which he predestinated them in Christ, before the foundation of the world: and the Son rejoices over them, to glorify his Father in them, by accomplishing a perfect reconciliation. What satisfactory Security does this afford to the Christian! Here is a solemn transaction between parties no less able than willing to fulfil their respective stipulations—between

parties, the expression of whose will is a guarantee for its fulfilment. But to confirm it the more before the intelligent universe, and especially to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, the Father is represented as ratifying it by an oath. He is introduced by the Psalmist as declaring, "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me." And the declaration of the Son is to this effect, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo! I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." On such assurances as these we may well fix and establish our hearts, as upon a rock that cannot be shaken. God here pledges the honour of his own holiness, that he will perform the covenant made with his Son. The seed, therefore, promised to him—his people—his church, shall be given him, and shall remain a testimony to the truth of the covenant unto the end of time.

What condescension is here! The great God—the God of inviolable truth, meets the very doubts and fears of his children, by consenting, as it were, for their satisfaction, to confirm his own word by the sanction of an oath! Freely, then, may the timid Christian give his fears to the wind. Ere time began, he shared in the love of the Father, and

of the Son. Designs of grace were formed respecting him, and their accomplishment secured by the word and the oath of God;—and for what end was that security given? Hear the Apostle: "That we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Again, as it regards the Son, there is a position in which he is placed in Scripture that we ought not to overlook. In connection with the fact of God's people being chosen in him, and given to him, he is presented to us in a truly interesting and amiable form, as telling us of the joy with which he contemplated his mediatorial engagements. What else is the import of these remarkable words? "When he" (the Father) "appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; *rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.*" Ere the habitable parts of the earth were prepared for their tenants, or the stage on which he was to perform his part was erected, we find him here anticipating, and, if we may so speak, singing, of the joy that was set before him. He takes pleasure in the contemplation of it. While he surveys the many coming events, with that eye that sees all things from the beginning to the end, his benevolent mind rests with peculiar interest upon the labours and sufferings he had undertaken to pass through, and upon their glorious and happy results. On

these he fixes his regards. They constitute his joy. How great, then, how incomprehensively great, must the object be whence there could spring a joy worthy to fill the mind of the Son of God! It was indeed great; nothing less than to sustain the honours of the Godhead, and reconcile an apostate world. We can conceive of no other object so great, or so important as this. In all its aspects, it has a magnificence which nothing we know of can equal. The Agents that conduct it; the means employed in its execution; and the events that develope and bring it to maturity, are all of the grandest order, and on the grandest scale. The universe appears interested in it. We have seen that the Divine mind was occupied with it from eternity. God, the Father, originates the great and gracious scheme; God, the Son, freely undertakes the conditions; and God, the Holy Spirit, supplies the benefits of the whole to the heirs of salvation. The holy angels look on, wonder at, and study, the manifold wisdom of God; while the devils, with envious enmity, take the alarm, and set themselves and their emissaries in array against it!

And on MAN's account is the universe thus moved! His are the interests more particularly involved in these transactions!—the interests of sinful, degraded MAN! "Lord! what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!" What a stretch of condescension, towards a race that had rendered

themselves worthless! What amazing love, to souls that had so deeply offended! But what conclusions follow from this reflection? Surely, first, if the interests of God's chosen people occupy so large a share of his kind regards, they must be well secured; nothing can endanger those interests. Not one of the chosen can fail to receive the needful graces of the Spirit; not one can fail of entering on the possession of the Privileges connected with his final salvation. To all these they are appointed of the Father; to procure these for them they are given to the Son, who expressly declares, "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

It follows also, from the above considerations, that if the salvation of his people be so great an object with the Divine mind, it ought most certainly to be with *them* their first, their paramount concern. Of itself, being *a matter of eternity*, it is of unspeakable moment; and estimated so highly by such Agents as we have been speaking of, it claims the constant, serious, and devout attention of every Christian. It is important to his own peace, to have a good ground to believe that he is in the keeping of Christ; that his life—his new, his spiritual life, is "hid with Christ in God." With this desirable end, it becomes him to hold himself dead with Christ—dead to the world, that he may live more entirely to him. His conversation ought to

be habitually in heaven. His treasure is there; his heart should be there also. His life among men should be that of one who has ceased to reckon earth his home; who has found a better country, that is an heavenly; and who is giving diligence, by a life of faith and obedience, to make his calling and election sure. Thus let the Christian live, and enjoy the high satisfactions, the pure delights, with which the religion of the Gospel is fraught. Believing himself to be in Christ, let him pray earnestly for the Spirit of Christ, that he may walk even as he also walked, and bring forth fruit, much fruit, unto God. Christ is the Vine; he is the branch. The more he abounds in the fruit which characterizes that tree, the more intimate will be his union with it. The more fully the Christian resembles his Lord, the more boldly will he appropriate the great truth that he has been given to him of the Father; and will the more freely delight himself in it, as a cheering Security for his receiving and enjoying every Privilege of an heir of salvation. Another Security of this nature is found in the consideration—

III. That the Christian is bought with a Price.

Paul, in his First Epistle to the Church at Corinth, seeking to impress upon their minds the obligations they were under to exemplify a life of purity and devotedness to Christ, urges, among

others, this powerful motive, "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price." He justly felt, and wished the Corinthians also to feel, this to be among the weightiest possible of all considerations why they should glorify God in their bodies and in their spirits, which were his. But there is also another, and peculiarly interesting and gratifying, view of this important truth, which the Christian is warranted to take. It affords him a Security for the never-failing love of his Redeemer, and the possession of the Privileges promised in his Word. If bought with a Price, he cannot be overlooked by him who bought him. No; he cannot be indifferent to him. Whatever the Redeemer came to seek, to save, and to procure, at his own cost, must be ever dear to him. Of this the Christian may be sensible, when he reflects on what his Redeemer did and suffered to purchase a people to himself.

In the covenant of redemption there is confessedly much that is mysterious. Our limited understandings cannot fully comprehend so spiritual and sublime a transaction. But from certain of its terms, made known to us in the Word, we learn something of the engagements which the Saviour took upon himself; and in his subsequent performance of them they received an ample development, while the holiness, wisdom, and grace of God were impressively displayed in the whole of the wonderful scheme! He loved the souls of men, though

alienated from God, and exposed to wrath. He longed to have them reconciled, and to present them holy, and unblamable, and unreprovable in the sight of God. They were rebels against their lawful Sovereign, their Benefactor, their Maker, who had created them capable of supreme happiness in loving and obeying him, and in holding communion with him. Yet, all sinful and unlovely as apostacy had made them, they were the objects of Divine compassion. The Father resolved on salvation; and the Son engaged to accomplish it. But to effect so great a triumph of mercy—to restore from the ruin to which the whole human race was exposed, much was to be done, much to be suffered. The broken law was to be repaired; justice to be satisfied; and the holiness and truth of God to be maintained inviolate. Incompatible with these demands, there could be no salvation. Who could meet, and fulfil them? The Son of God alone. Accordingly, in the fulness of time, he came, as in the volume of the book it was written of him. He came; but how?—in our nature, and as our substitute! The law had been given to *man;* and man had dishonoured it. To restore to it its due honours, it still inflexibly required every jot and tittle to be fulfilled *by man.* Christ, therefore, humbled himself to become incarnate; and in our room fulfilled all righteousness, magnifying the law, and making it honourable. But the guilt of man was to be atoned for: the Justice of God de-

manded the penalty of his offences, without the suffering of which there could be no remission of sins. The life of the sinner demanded the death of the Substitute. In fine, the arch-enemy of God and man, the great Seducer, was to be vanquished; his works to be destroyed; and an open triumph to be gained over all the powers of darkness. Such were the conditions to which the Divine Redeemer submitted; such the work he undertook to do. But no tongue can tell, no mind conceive, the things that were involved in doing and finishing such a work! The facts, indeed, are recorded, though their nature and extent of pressure upon the benevolent Substitute surpass our comprehension. There is in them a height and a depth, a length and a breadth, that transcend the utmost stretch of our thoughts. We can, however, speak of the facts; we can meditate upon them;—they ought to be ever full in our remembrance, ever dear to our hearts.

To effect his gracious purpose,—to "purify unto himself a peculiar" (a purchased) "people," he was made flesh, and dwelt among us. He so dwelt, however, not as a Prince among his subjects, but as a Servant—the lowliest among the lowly. He came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Though Lord of all, he chose to be so poor that he had not where to lay his head. But he not only condescended to this destitution of earthly possessions, and made himself of no reputation among

the powerful and the rich; he even submitted to be "despised and rejected of men," and to become "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He pleased not himself,—he sought not his own ease and gratification; but suffered contempt, reproach, and cruel mockery from them among whom he went about doing good, and whose salvation he sought. Meanwhile the wickedness and profanity that prevailed around him must have daily grieved and distressed his pure and holy mind, to a degree far beyond our conception. The unbelief, the hardness of heart, the hypocrisy, the malice, of many that heard his gracious words, and saw his benevolent acts, could not but deeply wound a spirit like his. But all this he bore with perfect, untiring patience, and endured with unbroken meekness of temper the contradiction of sinners against himself. Thus he passed through a life of continuous affliction, bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows, till at last, brought as a lamb to the slaughter, he submitted, for our iniquities, to an ignominious death. To this, and to a suffering of soul infinitely more than we can describe, the Saviour gave himself, as a Price, to ransom his people. Let the Christian, then, when tempted to doubt or fear respecting his interest in the tender remembrances of such a Saviour, reflect on this. He cannot but stand in a very dear relation to ONE who has suffered so much for him. Let him reflect on the astonishing love of the eternal Son of God,

who, in order to purchase his people, of whom the Christian is one, took upon him their nature,—lived, suffered, and died in it, and with it rose again, and carried it to the right hand of God in the highest heavens;—let him reflect on the advocacy and intercession he is carrying on there, in behalf of all his purchased people; and on the power that is given to him on earth, as well as in heaven, to promote their interests; and then question, if he can, the certainty of his obtaining every promised Privilege here, and the glorious inheritance reserved in heaven for him. Can he not, in all this, read a Security sufficient to allay all anxiety, to dissipate every fear? Oh, let not the Christian, under any circumstances, indulge timidity, or darkness of mind. Let him, like the Psalmist, have recourse to prayer, that his eyes may be opened to behold the wondrous things that have been done, and are doing, for him. Let him trust in the faithfulness of his Redeemer, who, having given *himself*, has guaranteed every lesser gift needful to his spiritual welfare, for time and for eternity; "for the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." This leads us to another, and highly important, Security for God's people—

IV. They have direct Assurances addressed to them, or spoken of them, in God's Word.

The communications made in the word of God relative to the character and circumstances of his own people are to them inestimably precious. They open up to them treasures of wisdom and knowledge, by which their understandings are enlightened, and their lives regulated. They form the charter of their rights and liberties. They are their authority for their maxims, and their expectations. To the oracles of God, and especially to those passages which bear upon their own case, they make daily reference. To them they repair, as to their Urim and Thummim, for counsel, for instruction in righteousness, and for the strengthening of their faith. Thence they derive the warnings that preserve them from evil; the light by which they distinguish truth from error, and the way of safety from the paths of the destroyer. There they are met by arguments, and appeals, and motives, which tell upon the judgment and the heart, and urge them forward in the pursuit of meetness for their heavenly inheritance. They recognise in the Divine communications the voice of love, no less than of authority. While it is the word of a Sovereign, it is also that of a Father. In the character of one, he issues the precepts of his will; in that of the other, he bestows the promises of his grace. In both respects his people have, in all ages, venerated and loved his Word. A saint of old, who was well versed in the Sacred Records, has left his testimony respecting them, in terms of

the highest admiration of their excellence, and of his most cordial attachment to them. He seems, on repeated occasions, to labour for language sufficient to express his sense of their surpassing worth. He praises them for the perfection of their wisdom, the righteousness of their counsels, and the clean, unstained purity of their truth. He extols them, under various titles, as converting the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, and enlightening the eyes. He declares that they are "more to be desired than gold; yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb;" and exclaims, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Thus highly did David prize the sacred oracles of his day: how much more ought the Christian, possessed of the enlarged, the completed canon of Holy Writ, to hold it dear to his heart; and to esteem the Word of his God and Saviour more than his necessary food! Yes, that Word is the great luminary in the moral world to him. What the beams of the sun in the firmament are to our earth, the words of God, directed and blessed by the Holy Spirit, are to the Christian. They shed upon him light, warmth, liveliness, and health. They shine upon his path, preserving him from falling into snares, while they operate, by their penetrating influence, as incentives to the pursuit of holiness. Not only so; they prove also a never-failing source of encouragement, comfort, and consolation, in his every time of need.

If, as we shall suppose in the present case, the Christian should be made, from whatever cause, to pass under a cloud of spiritual desertion; if he has lost, for a season, the more cheering manifestation of the Divine countenance, he is apt to sink into fear and despondency. He begins, perhaps, to question whether he be at all interested in the love of God, and to entertain the dreadful apprehension that he is self-deluded; or, like the Psalmist, he is ready to cry out, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" We must not be surprised, if we find the truly pious Christian in this state of mind. His heavenly Father not unfrequently sees it meet, for his own glory, and the Christian's greater stability, to try, by such visitations, the reality and strength of his godly principles. Besides, the man, while in the body, is still imperfect. Beset with infirmities, and exposed to temptations, he is in what is called the *militant* state, and has enemies to contend with too powerful and subtle for his own strength or wisdom to overcome. Timidity, weakness of faith, the appetites of the flesh, cause him at times to halt, to forget his God, to backslide. God, therefore, as a wise and affectionate Father, employs the rod, in various ways, to chasten and ultimately restore his erring child. He hides his face, and the Christian, conscious of his loss, is

troubled. His filial affections are stirred up within him, and will not allow him to be happy under the withdrawment of the paternal countenance. He has recourse to prayer, and the Spirit of God leads him to his own Word for instruction and consolation. There he learns afresh the wisdom and goodness of God, in all his dealings with him. He is made more sensible of human frailty, and God's unchanging faithfulness; and rejoices in the assurance he receives that, however variable may be his *experience*, his spiritual *safety* is more deeply fixed than the deep-rooted mountains, that cannot be shaken.

Has the Christian been tempted to doubt his actual adoption into the family of God? He can meet that doubt by the testimony of the Word, which expressly tells him that "as many as received Christ," under his own ministry, when on earth, "to them gave he power" (*right*, or *privilege*) "to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." These primitive believers, one and all, without exception, received the adoption. We are admitted to this high Privilege on receiving Christ, agreeably to the gracious purpose of God, in sending him forth to be our propitiation. "He was made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The Christian is, therefore, as much assured of his sonship as he is that he has received Christ, in the character in which the

Gospel presents him—as his Surety and his Saviour. If the tempter, nevertheless, seek to disquiet and terrify the Christian by the remembrance of his sins, as though he must not flatter himself that God will, by any means, tolerate his want of conformity to his holy law, he draws his answer to this from the sacred oracles. There he is taught that Christ is the Mediator of that new covenant, in which God declares, respecting his spiritual Israel, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

"I am, it is true," may the Christian say, "I am "not worthy of the least of all God's mercies, far "less of the rich and precious privileges of his "adopted children. My sins have been many and "great. I am still an imperfect, and, naturally, a "sinning creature; but I am now made happily "conscious that sin has lost its dominion over me. "I loved it once; now I hate it: and I hate it, "not only as my own enemy, that would destroy "me, but as the enemy of him who died for me, "even of Christ, who is all my salvation, and all "my desire. True, the remains of sin I still feel "within me. I deplore them, and have a loathing "of them as the dregs of my once total pollution. "These drive me to watchfulness and prayer, "while I look to that blood which cleansed my "pollution away, and to that righteousness through

"which I am justified before God. Once I took "pleasure in distance from God; and as to the "Saviour, there was in him no form, nor comeli- "ness, nor beauty, that I should desire him: now, "my heart's desire is to live near to God; the hours "of communion with him I reckon the happiest of "my life; and Christ is to me exceeding precious. "He is my hope, my peace, my rock. To him "I trust, as to my shield: in him I boast, as my "glory, and the lifter up of my head. With this "spirit in me, therefore, I humbly trust, the Holy "Spirit himself beareth witness, that I am a child "of God. I feel it to be no spirit of bondage en- "gendering fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby "I am entitled to cry, 'Abba, Father!' I am "encouraged by the Lord Jesus himself to regard "*his* Father as *my* Father; to address him under "that endearing name; and to ask of him with con- "fidence, as of a Father, whatsoever things my "case requires. On this authority I draw near, "and humbly claim the privilege of a son."

Thus far it is well with the Christian. The ground on which he claims this spiritual relationship is unquestionable: being in Christ, he is one of the family of God. But is he always found rejoicing in the felt-assurance of this distinguished privilege? Is he, at all times, carrying himself with that satisfied and happy bearing which corresponds with his birth and expectations? No; gladness of heart, and a cheerful demeanour along his path, are,

indeed, the privileges which belong to his character, but he is not always in the sensible enjoyment of them. Peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are his veritable portion, but he does not at all times realize it. The river, whose streams make glad the city of our God, is ever running, but the Christian is not always seen drinking at them, to refresh his soul. Brooding over his own infirmities, and shocked at his deficiencies as a follower of Christ, he writes bitter things against himself. Such is the lofty estimate he makes of the blessings of the covenant, that he feels as though so worthless, so sin-polluted, a creature as he, must not hope to possess such rich endowments. Meanwhile the invisible enemy of souls, in a way mysterious to us, but of which we can have no doubt, takes advantage of the darkness that has come over his mind, and he is kept in bondage for a season. But here the Holy Spirit applies the word of instruction; and he is reminded that, though the great things covenanted to be bestowed on the people of God are styled a *reward*, it is a reward not reckoned of *debt*, but of *grace*, and that he owes, not his pardon and justification only, but every subsequent mark of the Divine favour, with the ultimate possession of the heavenly inheritance, solely to the merits of Christ in his room, and not, in any degree, to himself. It is impressed afresh upon his mind, that he is not to contrast the riches of God's grace, or the glories and blessedness of the

future state, with his own character and doings, or with those of the most eminent Christian, otherwise than to promote humility and grateful love: he is ever to look upon them as the reward of Christ's righteousness, and of his travail of soul; and that by him they are graciously made over to his people. He "made his soul an offering for sin," according to the covenant; and therefore they are all *his;*— and then, notice the Saviour's gratuitous bequest, "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them. Father! I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory;" and to crown all, when he was come to that glory, he declared, through his servant John, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne!"

When the Christian comes to duly consider this truth his fears pass away. He has a more vivid perception than ever of the glory and the grace of his Divine Redeemer. He debases himself, as altogether unworthy; while he looks up with fresh admiration to him whose love induced him to serve and to suffer, that he might procure him the unspeakable benefits now possessed, and the blessedness that yet awaits him. "Not unto me," he is ready to cry, "not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, "but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and "thy truth's sake! Yes, blessed Jesus! for all are

" thine. Eternal life, with all its wonders of grace
" and glory, is the purchase of thy love. To thee,
" as my Ransom, I owe my deliverance from the
" pit: to thee I owe the forgiveness of my sins; my
" adoption into the family of God; the sanctifying
" influences of the Holy Spirit; and my hope of a
" blessed immortality. To thee I owe every ac-
" cepted approach I make to the throne of grace;
" for thou hast given me, for a plea, the use of
" thy own name. With that name I prevail; and
" the Father himself loveth me, for thy sake. Thou
" thyself pleadest for me before the throne, and
" givest efficacy to my feeble supplications. Of a
" truth, Lord! without thee I can *do* nothing;
" without thee I *am* nothing; but thou hast said,
" 'My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength
" is made perfect in weakness.' I am poor and
" needy; but thy Word assures me that thou think-
" est on me, and carest for me. I am liable to
" be distracted with earthly solicitudes and secular
" cares; but these are all soothed by thy kind and
" merciful admonitions.—'Take no thought, say-
" ing, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink?
" or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your
" heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need
" of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom
" of God and his righteousness; and all these
" things shall be added unto you.' I have spiritual
" enemies, many and mighty, to encounter, and I
" am utterly unable of myself to cope with them;

" but thou hast pledged thy word to me, 'No
" weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;
" and every tongue that shall rise against thee in
" judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heri-
" tage of the servants of the Lord; and their
" righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.' My own
" corruptions, I confess, do ofttimes prevail to raise
" up mists of doubt and fear upon my soul, to inter-
" cept the light of my heavenly Father's counte-
" nance from view.—Thou withdrawest thyself,
" and I am troubled; but, O how restorative, how
" cheering are thy words, when I hear thee saying,
" 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but
" with great mercies will I gather thee! In a
" little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a
" moment; but with everlasting kindness will I
" have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer!'
" Ever blessed Saviour! with thee dwelleth all ful-
" ness—fulness of wisdom, of power, of righteous-
" ness, of tenderness, and of love! Out of the
" unbounded fulness of thy grace and lovingkind-
" ness, thou hast made ample provision, in thy
" Word, to meet my every possible case; and not
" mine only, but that of every one that truly
" seeks thee. In condescension to our infirmities,
" and to assure the most timid among us, thou
" hast assumed all the relations of life character-
" ized by the peculiar protection, tenderness, and
" kindness of their office. Thou art the good, the
" faithful Shepherd; the affectionate Father; the

" constantly-attached Brother; the benevolent " Friend; the victorious Captain of salvation; the " unerring Leader; the atoning High Priest; the " ever-living Advocate, and Intercessor, to plead " in heaven! Lord! henceforth let these considera- " tions operate with irresistible attraction upon my " heart and mind, disposing me to consecrate body, " soul, and spirit to thy service and glory, for thou " hast redeemed them. Let me be an efficient " servant in thy cause upon earth; and let the motto " of my badge ever be, 'TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST, " AND TO DIE IS GAIN.' "

Thus have we endeavoured to illustrate some of the Christian's Securities for the blessings and Privileges promised him in Christ. Many more might be produced, all of them important and precious to the Christian; but these must now suffice. The Christian's own experience will suggest others, on which he may dwell, from time to time, with no less profit than delight. And now, while he is meditating on those that have been placed before him, we would put to him the question, "How much owest thou to thy Lord?"—a question which, on a review of all that has been done and provided for him, he must feel to come forcibly home, not to his conscience only, but to his heart also. He will not, like the debtors in the parable, go about to make the amount of what he owes to his Lord appear less than it is. Such a thought is far from him. He knows his debt to be in-

calculable. His only answer to the question, "How much?" must be, "I know not. This only I know,—the amount of my obligations to Divine love cannot be told: but I rejoice in the prospect of an eternity in heaven, where I shall be ever making my acknowledgments; for I shall be ever a debtor."

The Christian, then, contemplating his spiritual Privileges, so many and so valuable, with the Securities granted him for their possession, cannot but feel himself bound to serve his God and Saviour with supreme love; to love him with all his heart, his soul, his strength, his mind. Nothing less is due towards his God, whose love has abounded towards him so liberally, in all that is wise, merciful, and condescending. Of such demonstrations, on the part of God, he can give no adequate description. They far exceed, in rich and wonderful, all the powers of his conception: for he cannot forget that that love must needs pass all understanding which was extended to him, in his state of rebellious enmity against all that was Divine and holy; and that raised him up thence, not to reconciliation only, but to the honour of adoption, to the paternal love of God, to the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternal bliss. When he considers, too, that to accomplish all this, the Father spared not his own Son, but gave him up to the humiliation of a servant, to obey, and bring in a perfect righteousness for him, and to the pains of a

sacrificial death, to atone for his guilt, he is filled with wonder and love, which he is unable to express but in terms of heartfelt praise: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!"

And now, taking leave of this subject, I would invite the Christian reader to observe how justly, and how feelingly, the Apostle has said, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich!" Thou canst not, my fellow-Christian, think of the rich Privileges which, through faith in Christ Jesus, are made over to thee, in his Gospel, without entering, in some degree, into the spirit of these words. What thou knowest of the grace of Christ (it is impossible to know it fully) must operate upon thy mind, in thy best moments, as the most powerful of all incentives to grateful love,—to willing service,—to self-denial,—and to entire consecration, for the honour and glory of so generous, so benevolent, a Saviour as this. Thou wilt feel his claim upon thee to extend to all that thou hast, to all that thou art; and the aggregate of all that thou canst put together, including thyself, will amount to nothing, in contrast with the immeasurable love of Christ towards thee,—immeasurable, I say, unless thou canst calculate the distance

from the highest throne in heaven to the cross on Calvary. Is it so, that, to invest thee with the Privileges we have been noticing, the Lord of Glory hesitated not to descend to abject poverty, and ignominious death? What then remains, but that thou live no longer to thyself, nor to the world, but to him who did all this for thee? Such love and grace as *his* demand of thee that thou labour, by tongue, by head, by heart, by hand, to make the savour of his name and Gospel known wherever thy feet may travel, wherever they may rest. Thou wilt feel bound to own Christ as thy Pattern, thy Leader, thy Governor, as well as thy Priest and Intercessor; and whilst "the life thou now livest in the flesh, thou livest by the faith of the Son of God," as the sole Author of thy acceptance and entire salvation, thou wilt be careful and zealous to maintain good works; labouring and abounding in them, as though thou hadst to procure thyself thereby a title to the crown of righteousness. Thou wilt glory in Christ, and in his cross, as the alone foundation of thy hope; and, at the same time, be putting forth all thy energies to promote his glory, in bringing in others, through faith in him, to obtain pardon of sin, sanctification of nature, and the enjoyment of Privileges like thine own,—Privileges connected with eternal life, and the blessedness of the heavenly state. In fine, thou wilt endeavour so to live, that it shall be as unquestionable, that thou art not of this world

as if this inscription were legible on thy forehead, "FOR CHRIST AND HIS CAUSE." And "may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make thee perfect in every good work to do his will, working in thee that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever." Amen.

LECTURE VII.

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLDLING.

"The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour."
PROVERBS xii. 26.

THERE are many parties among men of which it may be said, that it is unimportant, as to one's moral character, on what side we may choose to be ranked. The question may be merely a literary one: it may be a matter simply of amusement, or taste; or it may be raised on certain points of ecclesiastical, or civil, polity. These affect not the conscience of a man. In such cases, either side of the question may be conscientiously enough embraced, —moral guilt is chargeable on neither. But there is a question of grave importance, and that not to one party or section of people only, but to all mankind, on which we are solemnly bound to take heed how we decide. It has to do with the conscience, the heart, the whole of man. Having said thus much, we shall doubtless be understood to mean the question of *Religion*. Here, we are not left to mere opinion, or to our own taste or inclination. Here, the truth to be embraced must be sought

from its proper source and authority; and these being ascertained, it remains only that we listen, learn, and obey.

The question, "What is Truth?" though once put, with thoughtless levity, by an ignorant and corrupt mortal to the Fountain-head of truth itself, is confessedly, if religiously taken, one of vital importance to every accountable being. Truth is desirable on every subject; but its value will be estimated according to its bearing upon our interests. Our present changeful and transitory state is not final; and much as it imports us how we spend it, there are many things belonging to it, and bounded by it, which to know is of little moment, in comparison with those which, being wholly spiritual, refer to, and have their results in, the state that is to follow,—our final—our eternal state. Concerning these, we do say, it is momentous, in the last degree, that we know, and hold fast, the truth.

We live in a world where error, and consequent folly, greatly abound. To arrive at the all-important truth of which we speak, we need a guide that will not err; and to supply the felt need of such a guide, many have stepped forward, in one age after another, to offer their favourite systems, as the announcements of unerring truth. But they have miserably failed: the question "What is Truth?" or, in more significant language, "What must I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" required a wisdom to answer it infinitely above the wisdom of man;

and if we would find this wisdom, we must look for it exclusively in the Word of God himself.

Now, in this Word we find the whole human race described as standing before God in two distinct parties,—the *righteous*, and the *wicked;* or, as they are characterized more particularly in the New Testament, the *believers*, and the *unbelievers*. It recognises no neutral, no third party. It classes every individual with one or other of these great divisions. This is expressed by Jesus Christ himself, the Founder of our religion, in language so decisive as to admit of no gloss, or a contrary meaning: "He that is not *with* me is *against* me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." If, then, to be *for* Christ be to embrace the truth; if *to be gathering with him* be to be found with the only party connected with present and everlasting safety, we need not say how deeply it concerns us to be assured that we are there. The alternative is tremendous! To believe that Christianity is a solemn truth, and yet to be indifferent whether I be a Christian or no, is contradictory—is impossible. How can I entertain the conviction that Jesus Christ is revealed in the Gospel, as the only "way, the truth, and the life," and yet not care to know whether I have embraced him with my soul, as my Lord, my light, my life? It cannot be. Nevertheless, such is the deadening influence of sin, such the infatuation it brings upon the heart and mind of man, that the phenomenon of a profession

of Christianity, with a sad neglect of the true characteristics of the Christian, is too commonly exhibited among us. "Light is come into the world," but alas! how many there are who, though they profess to respect that light, yet prefer their own darkness, and walk in it. Yes, the light *is* come, and that abundantly. It has flashed upon their understanding, and not unfrequently upon their consciences, with the vivid distinctness of the angel before the eyes of Balaam; yet, like him, they persist in their own dark and pernicious ways.

The feeling with which we contemplate the things we have been treating of will not allow us to part with our readers, till we have solicited their attention further, while we present a brief contrast between the believer and the unbeliever, or between the pious Christian and him who, whatever his profession, is merely a man of the world. Our aim is to show up each of the two characters in its proper light; and to raise the voice of warning against a false and fatal choice, and that of invitation to the paths of wisdom, safety, and peace. It is our anxious desire to leave upon our reader's mind, and our own, impressions that may lead to spiritual improvement. Proceeding, then, to set the Christian character before us, for a while, it becomes us to reflect that we are looking at the workmanship of God. It has therefore the highest possible claim upon our serious and attentive study.

This is a great subject; and we might expatiate

largely upon it, without exhausting its interest: but as much of what we have already said has borne upon various points of this character, we have now only to place it in some of those positions in which it forcibly demands the preference over its opposite and antagonist character. "The righteous," says Solomon, "is more excellent than his neighbour,"—the term *neighbour* here evidently meaning the *contrary* character—the irreligious, the ungodly. We adopt the sentiment, and say, in other words, THE CHRISTIAN IS MORE EXCELLENT THAN THE WORLDLING. He is—

1. A *wiser* man. He has been led to act upon the conviction that he has a spirit, or soul, within him, created to think, to know, to feel, to give account; that he is not simply an animal, born to exercise and gratify the senses for a brief period, and then die away into total extinction; but that the rational, responsible, immortal, nature is, truly and emphatically, the MAN. For the interests of this nature, therefore, he cares, and diligently provides. He reads and studies the Bible—the Word of God, the only true Record of his mind and will. He respects and attends to its sacred institutions. He learns how he is to think of the Divine character from what he has himself revealed; and in the pages of the same unerring Word he reads his own natural character. Assuredly, there is no knowledge comparable to this—none so essential to the best interests of man. It is so estimated and de-

clared by the lip of truth, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." And the Prophet bears high testimony to the paramount excellence of this knowledge, when he exclaims, "Thus saith the Lord, Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me; that I am the Lord, who exercise lovingkindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth." In connection with the knowledge of God, and as next in importance to it, the Christian studies himself. The one study, indeed, leads to the other; for if a man inquire into the nature and character of the Author of his being, he will necessarily feel that he is solemnly bound to seek also the knowledge of the relation he stands in to his Maker, which imports the knowledge of himself. Were he content to remain a stranger to God, he would be a stranger to himself; and not to know God is to remain ignorant, not only of one's self, but of everything that contributes to wisdom and happiness. The misery consequent upon such ignorance is repeatedly and impressively noticed in the Scriptures. "My people," says God, by his Prophet, "are foolish; they have not known me; they are sottish children; and they have none understanding. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black." And again, he cries, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon

the families that call not upon thy name." The knowledge of ourselves, or that acquaintance with our own nature, our tendencies, dispositions, and habits, that shall be salutary to our conduct in life, is a science urgently and faithfully pressed upon us in Scripture. "Let us search and try our ways," says the Prophet. "Keep thy heart," says the wise man, "with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." And David's counsel is, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." Sensible of the importance of such knowledge, and, at the same time, of his own insufficiency to arrive at just conclusions, and a true estimate of himself, by his own effort, he prays that God would institute the scrutiny himself, for his instruction. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts." The Apostle urges this study upon Christians, as a duty expected of them, and which it would be sinful to neglect. "Examine yourselves," he says, "whether ye be in the faith. Prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves?"

In the devout study of God's Word, the Christian is taught to reverence and adore him, as a God of holiness, justice, and truth: but he learns also from the same authority, and learns it with what the knowledge of himself naturally excites, heartfelt gratitude and gladness, that he is a God of mercy, compassion, and grace; and that he has, in his infinite wisdom and power, devised and accom-

plished a way whereby he can be a just God, and yet a Saviour. He hears and believes the testimony, that God sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Awake to a sense of his guilt, and the polluting and condemning power of sin, he feels his urgent need of such a propitiation, and flees for refuge to the hope set before him,—he becomes A CHRISTIAN.

Now, if to search for truth, as for hidden treasure, until it be obtained; if to shun evil, and pursue that which is good; if to escape from wretchedness and destruction, when the warning voice is heard, and hasten to gain a position of safety and of peace; if to do these things be the part of wisdom, can any one refuse to approve the wisdom of the Christian, whose conduct is precisely this? "Behold! there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." It betokens a storm; and a voice from a quarter, where there is perfect knowledge of the irresistible violence and destructive force with which it comes, warns the traveller to betake himself instantly to "a hiding-place from the wind, to a covert from the tempest," and, as it warns, points him to the only covert available to his safety. He obeys the friendly warning; flees to the spot unscathed, and rejoices in his security. His was a wholesome alarm; and thus the warning voice, through his faith in its truth and sincerity, made him wise unto his salvation. Had he neglected, or despised, that warning, and gone

heedless on his way, till the tempest broke upon him, who but would have condemned him for a fool and a madman? So judged Solomon. "A prudent man," saith he, "foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." This prudence, in a spiritual sense, this heaven-inspired wisdom, is the Christian's. And how has he become possessed of it? Simply by first humbling himself *to become a fool, that he might be wise.* He was, it may be, sufficiently wise in matters of the world. There was no lack of knowledge in him to endanger his temporal prosperity: but the way of eternal life he knew not, till he gave himself to the instruction of the Holy Spirit by his own Word, and received the kingdom of God as a little child. And so may the Worldling. The same way is free to him. But what is *his* position? Is it a safe one? Has *he* made a wise choice?—Let us see.

The man of the world may flatter himself that he is sufficiently prudent; that he has done well in not suffering the prizes of the present life, by which men are generally enriched, to go by him, without an honest effort to gain as many of them as he could; and that to him it appears not only lawful, but wise, to lay up what he can in store, against a day of infirmity, or unfavourable vicissitude. He may even gather from men of his own class abundance of suffrages in favour of his principle and conduct, and appeal to their testimony in vindica-

tion of his claim to the praise of wisdom. The man we are here supposing may not only reason thus: he may go farther, perhaps, and say, that he is not insensible to the obligations of religion; that he reads his Bible; that he frequents a place of worship; and has prayers at his home. He may urge also his social virtues: that he deals honestly with all men; that he would rather assist a neighbour in need, than defraud him, at any time; that he is not inconsiderate of the poor, nor steeled against the sufferings of the sick and the destitute; and therefore, all these things considered, he maintains that nothing but the spirit of rank uncharitableness will refuse to pronounce him a Christian.

All this representation, however, may be true of the man whom, without the fear of being proved uncharitable, we still denominate a Worldling. If we are asked to say what we mean by a "Worldling," we would define him, "One who makes the possession of temporal things his main pursuit; seeking to secure to himself what he deems good for the present life, to the seclusion of due concern about that which is needful for the life to come." Now, among men against whom this charge may fairly lie, there is great variety of character. The individual children of the same house shall differ from each other in feature, though they all bear a common family likeness. The Worldling's is a large family, and many are the individual varieties among them. Some are found to carry the moralities to a much

higher and brighter exhibition than others. Let us look at some of the best specimens that are met with in men of the world. Here is one whose meekness of temper, whose amiable and condescending manners, deservedly win him the acceptance, the love, of every circle into which he comes. There is another duly honoured, for abounding much in what we call the nobler qualities of our nature. He is faithful in his friendships, of inviolable integrity, and disinterested generosity. He merits, and he gains our applause; and the most pious man, on beholding such a character, may well love him, as his Lord did the rich young man in the Gospel, who yet lacked the one thing needful. But the praiseworthy qualities we have named are the results merely of a happy temperament, or physical constitution—aided and confirmed, perhaps, by educational influence. Such men are indebted to the goodness of God, who framed them to these happy tendencies; and yet, alas! they exhibit them with the same absence of God from their thoughts, and the same insensibility of his claims, as are found in the manifestations and habits of the gentler and more tractable animals of the lower creation. Of such characters, notwithstanding their amiabilities, the Sacred Word declares that "God is not in all their thoughts." Their plans, their purposes, their ways, are all formed and pursued, without asking his counsel, without regard to his will, any more than as if he had no existence: or, at best, they

have an obscure, distant, apprehension of such a Being; but the thought, being found inconvenient, is speedily dismissed. There is nothing, then, in these exemplifications, that can make the subjects of them less obnoxious to the displeasure of God, than the most odious of sinners. By him they are ranked in the same class. When he looks down from heaven on the children of men, to see if any do understand, and seek God, he looks on them also, and finds them equally unmindful of him, equally averse from the study of his character and his law, and equally bent on the pleasures and pursuits of the world, as the most hateful of the species. He finds their hearts and their doings recklessly bidding him away from them; speaking, as it were, in that fearful language, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

But we have supposed a variety amongst them, where a profession of religion is made. One of that class will tell us, that he is a member of a Church of Christ; frequents the sanctuary; respects the ministers of the Gospel, and contributes of his substance to the support of the good cause; in his family the Bible is read, and prayers are offered up. —Is he not therefore a Christian? This question must be answered by putting some others. Where is the man's heart? Is it supremely fixed on God? Is it the love of Christ that has constrained him to confess his name, to join his people, and to serve his cause? Is it delight in communion with God

that draws him to prayer and every devotional exercise? In fine, Has he renounced the world, because he loathes its principles and practices? and has he embraced Christ, because he believes in him as his Saviour, and longs to be holy, as he is holy? No; the man whose heart is still in the world may be, and may do, all that he has alleged in his favour, whilst these things are, all the while, issuing from other sources than those on which we have questioned him.

In the present day, when the profession of Christianity is very generally diffused, and some degree of reverence for the Bible is expected of almost every man, the utmost stretch of charity will not go to the extent of including all that call themselves Christians in the family of God's recovered and converted children. Various are the reasons that induce many to put on the semblance of piety. A good name among a certain denomination of Christians; the patronage they may have it in their power to confer on a man's line of business; the influence of some family, or friendly connexions; or, the pacification of an uneasy conscience,—these, and other reasons of a like-worldly and carnal nature, will account for the form of godliness assumed by many who know nothing of its power. What avails it to a man of this description that he reads his Bible? He reads it as a prescribed form, an unimpressive task, intended only for the hour. Unhappily, while he thus reads, "the veil is upon

his heart." What avails it, that he prays at home, or in the sanctuary, if he carries to the throne of God a heart of cold indifference, or pharisaic pride? He "regards iniquity in his heart, and the Lord will not hear him." What avails it, that he frequents the house of God? He comes thither, as the Israelites came before the Prophet; and against them the Lord himself testifies, "They come unto thee as the people cometh; and they sit before thee as my people; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." And what does his respect for the ministers of the Gospel, and their occasional remonstrances, amount to? So did King "Herod fear John the Baptist, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly;"—but Herod was no Christian.

Where now, we would ask, is the wisdom of the Worldling's choice? Is it to be found in the intrinsic, or relative, value of the portion chosen? What are riches, if riches be his pursuit?—mere glittering toys, that too commonly minister to pride, selfishness, and vanity. Read the Apostle's sentiment on this subject, and then say whether *he* is wise who has chosen riches for his portion: "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the

love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Does the Worldling set his heart upon loud applause, wide-spread fame, the distinctions — the honours that the world lavishes upon its favourites? Alas! what are all these but the breath of poor, fickle man, won to-day, and, it may be, lost to-morrow! Our Lord sufficiently shows the danger of indulging an ambition of this kind, when he says, "How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another; and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" The Worldling, indeed, is often wise in his generation. He shrewdly devises, and skilfully concocts, his schemes; and then keenly and indefatigably pursues, until he accomplish them. He gains his object; he reaches the pinnacle of his ambition, and plumes himself upon his wisdom. Infatuated man! The poor maniac, who, decked out in straws and feathers, struts about, and shouts himself a king, is not more unconscious of his actual state, than this man of the world is blinded to his! All his wisdom is folly; all his success, a curse! Born for eternity, he has staked its interests on the short-lived enjoyments of time, and bartered his soul for the smiles and flatteries of a perishing world. He has said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall

be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Now, we have seen that the Christian's part is the reverse of all this. It is not that he has chosen poverty, instead of riches; or a life of pain and discomfort, instead of ease and enjoyment. No; but we may thus illustrate the conduct he has adopted. "Ask of me," said a monarch to his favourite, "anything which I have in my power to bestow, and I will give it to thee." Reflecting on this liberal promise, the favourite thought with himself, "If I ask wealth or honours, or a situation of power and grandeur, I know I shall get them; but I will ask something that will be sure to command all these things, and be accompanied with them." And knowing that, if he became the king's son-in-law, he should be raised to some of the highest dignities of the kingdom, he said, "Give me thy daughter to wife." The wisdom of this man's calculations, and the justness of his conclusions, are not to be denied. Such, in a *spiritual* sense, is the wisdom of the Christian. God has, in his word, invited us all to choose our portion; and to ask, promising that we shall receive. If riches and worldly honours be the desire of our hearts, we may have them, and shall soon lose them; but the Christian has sought and obtained relationship to God. He has been adopted into his family.

Following the admonition, and believing the promise of his Lord, he "seeks first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," leaving all other things to be added as he shall see fit. *He* can lack no good thing, who has God for his Father, heaven for his home, and eternal glory for his inheritance; for, in subserviency to his spiritual interests, all things are his, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come,—all are his. With his present lot, whatever it may be,—prosperity, or adversity,—fulness, or scantiness,—prominence, or obscurity, he has learnt therewith to be content. But he has looked forward to his more proper existence in a world without end; and for that he has made provision, in the way of God's appointment. While the man of the world is tremblingly alive to the fluctuations of almost every day's transactions, the Christian has cast "the anchor of his hope into that within the veil," and remains unmoved. We cannot, then, hesitate to pronounce his course by far the *wiser* of the two in question.

2. The Christian is *more useful* than the Worldling. The wisdom we have been briefly, and in general terms, attributing to the Christian is that which comes from above. Its peculiar excellence is thus beautifully described by an Apostle: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy

and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." The man who is blessed with this wisdom is especially fitted to be useful. It disposes, it even constrains him to be so. The wisdom of this world is very often resolvable into mere selfishness, putting a man upon the readiest and surest way of compassing his own ends, of aggrandizing himself, though at the expense of another. The love of self is confessedly the ruling principle among men of the world. There may be, and there *are*, some lovely examples of the influence of a contrary principle; but they form the exception, and that exception is very limited. Their almost universal object is to amass wealth; and in the eagerness of their sordid pursuit, they stay not to consider whether the means they take be right or wrong. In every department of business, or traffic, we see them, as the Prophet complained of the people of his day, "every one, from the least to the greatest, given to covetousness." To gratify this passion, how frequently are they found stooping to the mean practices of falsehood, chicanery, fraud! In the general scramble for the pelf, pomp, and grandeur of this world, one is seen craftily taking advantage of another, and willingly rising on the ruins of his neighbour. This is but a humbling picture of human nature; but that such is the course of the world around us, that these bad principles do prevail among those who are content to have their portion in this life, is a truth too plain

for denial or dispute. Indeed, what is the judgment passed by the unerring Word on the world, and the men of the world?—"The whole world lieth in wickedness." We are forbidden to love the world, or the things that are in the world; and cautioned against worldly appetites, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." The principles of the world are so abhorrent from those of truth and piety, that friendship with the world is represented as enmity with God: "Whosoever, therefore, is a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Let us pause for a while, and ponder these words. What a fearful idea do they convey of the state of the world! If a friendly association with it is denounced as enmity against God, how opposed to all that is good must its spirit and conduct be! And is it so, that we daily behold crowds of our fellow-immortals diligently, intensely, with all their powers, mental and physical, running a course of life in direct hostility against their Maker and their Judge? The thought is appalling! And, then, how immensely aggravated is the sadness of the spectacle, in the consideration that this ruinous course is driven on in the face of warnings, directions, invitations, kindly and graciously reiterated, to turn from it, to come into the right way, and be saved. This aggravation lies, at least, against a vast proportion of the world, into which the light is come; but "this is the condemnation, that men

have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

After this testimony given against the World by the Oracles of truth, it will be vain to look there for a useful character. A truly useful man, one really beneficial to mankind, will be found only in connection with Christianity—only in the Church of Christ. In saying this, we must be understood as having reference, not merely to the interests of time, but to those both of time and eternity. Usefulness is by emphasis a part of the Christian character. The Christian's profession is incomplete without it. He is bound by the very name he bears to make it his daily study. He is the disciple of ONE who "went about *doing good*," and who expects his disciples to follow in his steps. The regenerated nature is, so to speak, constitutionally benevolent. In proportion as the soul of man is renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, he abounds in willing, and in doing, good. Every one, therefore, who becomes a disciple of Christ, finds himself associated with a beneficent brotherhood—a band of benefactors of their kind; and of these individually it may be confidently affirmed, that he who is most eminently pious is most eminently useful.

Whatever fills the heart is sure to manifest itself in the life. The prevailing desire within operates on the tongue and the hand without, which, unless some strong motive be present to suppress, will

speak and act at its bidding. Hence the earthly desires that engross the heart of the Worldling give colour and tone to his whole conversation and conduct. You will find him, not merely *diligent*, but *ardent*, in business. His language, his air, his manner, all testify that what he calls the main chance—his earthly gains—is the paramount object with him. You will see him pushing that object in season, out of season; taking the world with him, not only to the shop, to the market-place, and to the change, but to the family board: and, could we make our way to the secrecy of his heart, we should perceive him busy with the world even in the house of God. How often have we had to lament some unequivocal illustrations of this sordid propensity acting very generally throughout society! Witness a recent instance, (not yet, indeed, entirely passed away,) when the mania for shares in the enterprises of the day seemed to have seized upon every family, and carried away the usual propriety of the public mind. It was seen, in all great towns at least, to rage unrestrictedly, occupying the time, the ingenuity, the passions, of men of every class, to the exclusion, in many cases, of almost every serious, and even prudent, thought. It was the all-engrossing topic of conversation in every mouth, and in every place. O Mammon! how numerous, and how devoted, are thy worshippers! Would to God they could be adequately met with a counter-array of zealous worshippers and

"servants of the most High God, who show unto men the way of salvation!"

But there is a power in the religion of Christ which subdues in him, who intelligently and cordially receives it, this selfish principle of the Worldling. That principle was dominant in him, as in others. Like them, he was the servant of "divers lusts and pleasures," and too much a lover of himself to be "his brother's keeper." But, brought by Divine influence to receive and profess Christ, his soul is instinct with apprehensions, feelings, and longings altogether new. Its rigidness is softened; its contractedness expanded; its coldness and deadness warmed, and quickened into life and activity. He now comes forth under a deep and controlling impression that he is permitted to live no longer to himself, but to him who died for him. "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" is now the question of his life; and according to the answer he receives from his Word and providence, he addresses himself to the work. Such is the benevolent spirit of his religion, such the bearing of his Lord's example, and of the lessons of the Gospel, that he feels himself called on to make society the better for him in every way within his power. Here the grand rule laid down for him by the Apostle is simple and comprehensive: "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men." His commission, therefore, as to the *kind* of good to be done, is unlimited, and, as to its *extent*, is bounded only by his means. It

assigns to him both fields of labour, temporal and spiritual. Looking upon every man, of whatever nation, rank, or condition, as his neighbour—nay, even as his brother, descended from one common parentage with himself, if he find any one suffering, he sympathizes; if he see him "naked, and destitute of daily food," he will, according to his ability, give him those things that are needful to the body. If, for such a case, his own resources are insufficient, he will often be seen pressing its urgency upon the attention of his richer neighbours, and become the cheerful almoner of their bounty, to afford the needed relief. "To do good, and to communicate," is his delight—his luxury. His sympathy with the bodily and mental sufferings, the temporal and spiritual destitution of his fellow-creatures, carries him to the house of the fatherless and the widow, in their affliction. Then, if pecuniary support be called for, he will do his best to afford it; but will not fail to present to the drooping mind, as its only stay and support, the truths of the Gospel; and to impart to the wounded spirit the balm and solace of its high and cheering consolations. See him again, under the influence of the same heaven-inspired principle, (for he does all for the glory of God,) see him exerting himself in originating, or promoting combinations of good men, to meet, and seek out, cases of distress, that a wider diffusion of benevolent action, and a larger amount of aid to the respective wants, may be effected. In

fine, he is ingenious in devising means of usefulness, which nothing but the Christian principle could suggest, and in the prosecution of which nothing but that principle could sustain him.

Then follow the Christian into that department of his labours which is more decidedly and directly of a religious character. In that department, you will see him, either personally, or by pecuniary aid, or both, promoting the religious education of the young; distributing, from house to house, among the poorer and less informed of his neighbourhood, monitors of instruction, in the form of tracts; or he is by the bedside of the sick and the dying, admonishing, comforting, and lifting the soul to God, by exhibiting the riches of his grace through a Redeemer. But is it needful to pursue this delineation any further? Are not the more extended labours of the Christian community before the world? Who is unaware of the generous, the noble, institutions of the Bible and Missionary Societies for propagating the knowledge of sacred truth at home and abroad? We need not speak of the self-denying toils of many a zealous Christian, as he explores the lanes and alleys of his town, or village, and penetrates into the wretched hovels and haunts of vice, that he may, with his Divine Master's blessing, pluck some brands from the burning. These things are known, or may be known, from publications that are issuing almost daily from the press. This contrast, then, which we have been

contemplating, brings us irresistibly to the conclusion, that the Christian, and *not* the Worldling, is the *useful* man.

3. The Christian is a *happier* man. The man of the world, who makes no pretensions to decided piety, stoutly disputes this. He will have it, that, for a man to give himself up to religious impressions and religious exercises is to take leave of all the pleasures of life, and submit to gloom and melancholy in their stead; that, for *his* part, he can enjoy his gains, his sports, his festivities, with various other pleasures, to which nature and society invite him; and that, while the Christian man renounces the world, and declaims against it as a great evil, he takes it as it is, and extracts from it whatever gratification it can yield him. In answer to this, we must tell the Worldling, that it is a representation given under an altogether wrong estimate of both the Christian's case and his own. We would say to him, Permit us to press upon you the consideration of the question, "What is really and truly your own condition?" You are proudly flattering yourself, and would fain make us believe, that it abounds in happiness, and is vastly preferable to a Christian life. You charge the Christian with loading his life with needless anxieties, and painful forebodings of evil, and affirm your own to be free, easy, and joyous. Then, how comes the direct lie to be given to this, in deep bitterness of soul, by the anguish you frequently suffer under

disappointed expectations of gain—sudden changes in public affairs—and the failure of speculations; or, by the writhing of envy, when you see another exalted above you, who happens to have risen into affluence, by means, perhaps, which proved, in your hands, unsuccessful? And then, if at any time you are driven into retirement, and seclusive thought, what are you often made to endure from an agitated and disquieted conscience? Does not last night's laughter sound in your ears as "the crackling of thorns under a pot?" Are not the gainful fruits of your cunning and dexterity, against the simplicity of your confiding neighbour, vexing you with charges of unfairness and cruelty? Is not the petulant ridicule you have been casting on the piety of some eminent Christian repeated to you, like the reading of your indictment in the voice of the arraigning Officer at the bar of God? And, oh! if you venture to look upwards,—if you do think of that God "in whom you live, and move, and have your being," and whom you have never acknowledged,—if you do think of the claims he has upon you, which you have habitually neglected—of the religion he has required you to revere, which you have rejected—of the warnings, admonitions, invitations, he has sent you, all of which you have insultingly set at nought,—ah! the fearful forebodings that seize upon your soul, at such moments, you cannot, you dare not, attempt to describe! But speak out, now,

and tell us, if this be not true of your experience!

Christianity is a system that invites to sober, sedate, profound reflection. It charges it as a duty on every disciple to think closely, and to examine himself, as in the sight of God. Will *your* system, if you have any, allow *you* to reflect? Will it suffer you to exercise the privilege, the prerogative of a rational creature—to commune with yourself, on your origin and your destiny—on the end of your being in relation to your Maker? No, no; it forbids reflection,—it scares you from it, as from a hateful troubler; and if, at any time, it should force itself upon your mind, you meet it with the spirit in which Ahab met Elijah, and, like him, exclaim, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

If such be the condition of things with the men of the world,—if such be the independence, the freedom, the happiness, of which they are so apt to glory, then well may the Christian, in deep commiseration of the wretched choice they have made for the portion of their souls, and heartfelt thankfulness for the grace that has led him to choose a better, turn inwardly, and say, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!" Of a truth, the way of transgressors is hard; and they who despise the counsel of the Almighty cannot fail to verify, to their own awful cost, the exclamation of the Pro-

phet, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked!"

But the Christian faith involves in it many anxieties, alarms, and fears. It does so; but they are such as it is both wise and salutary to entertain. In the experience of every Christian, there are moments of anxiety in guarding against sin, and temptations to sin, that he may not offend a good and a holy God. It would ill accord, too, with an enlightened conscience, to read the denunciations of God's wrath, in his own Word, against transgressors, without a feeling of alarm, knowing, as he does, the sinful tendency of human nature. This feeling, indeed, is allied with the graces of humility and contrition, and is approved in heaven: "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." The fear of the Christian is evidently not that which "hath torment." It partakes of a holy jealousy over himself, and a reverence of the Divine nature. He cannot—he would not approach his God without this reverential awe upon his spirit, when he contemplates the might, the majesty, the holiness of the King eternal, immortal, invisible, who filleth immensity. It is not the fear of a slave before his angry Master; nor of a criminal reluctantly and tremblingly approaching the stern and threatening countenance of his Judge. No; it is a fear perfectly compatible with love,—the filial awe that checks presumption,

while it strengthens allegiance and attachment, and serves to inspire the heart of the Christian with exultation, while he sings, "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

Still the men of the world will pertinaciously allege against the decided Christian, that his system of self-denial, by the severe restraints, and the drudgery of religious observances which it exacts of him, must render his life a course of continual wearisomeness and mental depression. To this it were enough to reply, that the only proper reference for the settlement of such a question is to the Christian himself. And what is *his* testimony? A flat contradiction to every such statement. He reports of his religion that "her ways are ways of pleasantness; and all her paths are peace;" that she prohibits him nothing but what would be hurtful, and enjoins nothing but what is beneficial; that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" and that concerning Jesus Christ he can truly say, "Whom though I have not seen, I love; in whom, though now I see him not, yet, believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." The pious Christian, so far from feeling any part of his Master's service irksome, is delighted to be accounted worthy to do him service; to him "the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden is light." If, then, we would judge correctly, if we would calcu-

late upon the principles of eternal truth, we must conclude that the Christian is a wiser, a more useful, a happier man, than the Worldling.

We have said much in commendation of the Christian character. Of its high privileges we have spoken at large, in the preceding lectures; and we have now shown that it challenges the preference over that of the Worldling, for wisdom, usefulness, and happiness. From these premises, the deduction fairly to be made is, we think, that THE CHRISTIAN IS THE FINEST SPECIMEN OF MAN upon the earth. We need not say that we assert this to the glory of God; for the Christian is the workmanship of God. And now, having brought our delineations and contrasts to this conclusion, can any sentiment more naturally arise out of it than this, —*it vitally concerns every hearer of the Gospel to seek to become a Christian.* We say *vitally;* for if it be important in any degree, it is so in the very highest. It is no vain thing. It is, in regard to all, a question of life, in the truest and gravest sense of the term. As Moses said to the people of Israel, when he had rehearsed the dealings of God towards them, so would we say to our readers, "We have set before you life and death; blessing and cursing; therefore choose life" and the blessing, and escape from death and the curse. We would earnestly entreat every one, whose eyes may have traced these pages, seriously to inquire into his own case, to examine himself by the Word of God, and know

with what party he has cast in his lot,—whether it be with Christ's, or that of the World. So far the question is simplified, that it is between two sides only. There is no variety, to distract the judgment and delay the decision. It is one, indeed, which admits of no delay. Wherever there is a consciousness of being still on the wrong side, your safety demands an immediate change. The shortest delay may prove fatal. To hesitate is to sin. But can you hesitate to make your choice, when glory, honour, and immortality are promised, on the one hand, and shame, confusion, and death are threatened, on the other? You could not possibly do so, but in a miserable state of mental darkness; "the god of this world having blinded your mind in unbelief, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto you." Sad state of an immortal spirit! What a spectacle of degrading infatuation must that spirit exhibit to the view of all holy intelligences in the universe! A spirit gifted by the Creator with capacities for knowing, contemplating, appreciating, adoring, loving, and enjoying Him, in all his great and glorious attributes, through eternity, in heaven, yet forfeits all, and refuses to fulfil this happy destiny, for the few, fleeting, precarious gratifications of the lusts of the eye and the flesh, upon earth! If the angels of God rejoice over a sinner that repenteth, O might they not weep, if weep they can, at folly and madness like this?

We would take the Worldling, as it were, by the hand—we would urge him—we would remonstrate with him; for we would fain rouse him out of his dangerous stupor. He is spell-bound; he is tied, and fettered by his sins—ensnared by the devil, and taken captive by him at his will; else, why this inveterate following after the world and the flesh, instead of listening to the call of wisdom? why this unresisting march towards destruction, instead of laying hold of eternal life? Look at the contemporaries of the patriarch Noah.—See how they corrupted their way upon the earth, and filled it with violence.—Destruction is threatened.—Noah warns and expostulates.—They sin on, either not heeding, or scorning and deriding his friendly expostulations. The threatened wrath at last breaks out; and the deluge, receiving its commission, rushes in, and sweeps the scornful sinners from the face of the earth, which they had defiled with their iniquities. Such is the type of your awful position, ye that forget God, and choose the world for your portion! You are not filling the earth with violence; you are not imbruing your hands in the blood of your fellow-men; nor destroying whole houses, or helpless individuals, to gratify your own wicked lusts and passions. But what are you doing? Are you not corrupting your ways upon the earth? Are you not immersing yourselves, your moral and your physical natures, in the business and the bustle of the present life, allowing the incessant clamour and

craving of your worldly affections and appetites to drown the voice of God, speaking to your conscience in his Word and providence? Are you not seizing on his many bounties without cherishing a thought of him who bestows them? In a word, are you not setting your supreme affections on the possessions of this passing world, and saying, in a manner, to them, "Ye are our gods?" Your state, then, must be highly perilous; for your neglect of God is attended with a deep aggravation. You have the full exhibition of God's law and testimony in his revealed Word; and many examples of his righteous displeasure against transgressors are recorded for your warning. These the antediluvians had not. They had, indeed, a faithful preacher in Noah; but you may have many Noahs, who warn you, and plead with you, to flee from the wrath to come. Nay, let us again remind you, that you have not warnings only, and examples of God's displeasure against transgressors set before you, but the kindest possible calls and encouragements are held out to you. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die?" This is the voice of God to you.

Nor is this view of God's character, as a merciful God, left to be gathered from *verbal* announcement only, strong as that announcement is: he has given demonstrations of it in *acts* of mercy and of grace

wholly like himself; above all, in that one astonishing act, which, while it transcends, embraces all others within it,—the gift of his Son Jesus Christ to be the propitiation for our sins. An atonement was essential towards a reconciliation. Man was unable to make it; and God, marvellous in his lovingkindness, gave his Son, while we were yet sinners, and at enmity with him, to assume our nature, and die for us! Of the intrinsic excellence and high relative value of such a gift, it is impossible adequately to express our grateful feeling,—it is far beyond our powers of thought or imagination; but with emotions which we are unable to express, it becomes us to join in the Apostle's burst of gratitude, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" This gift, Divine in its nature, life-giving, redeeming, enlightening, enriching, and eternally glorifying in its efficacy, is offered, O man of the world! to you, to win you away from the gross, vain, deceitful, soul-destroying fascinations of a world that lieth in wickedness, and which is ready to perish. What we say of the Divine gift, and of the character of the world, is true; it has been found true to the awful cost of many, and to the everlasting joy and happiness of many others. Yes; the rich Worldling, after death, "lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torments," while the pious Lazarus is carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord," we would persuade you to "flee for refuge to the hope that is

set before you." Stay not to think of the sacrifice you must make, in giving up the world. You have infinitely more at stake than the world can match. Consult not the world in a question like this; for the world is your enemy, and has been all along deceiving you. When a well-freighted ship at sea is overtaken by a mighty tempest, threatening, in combination with the tossing of the raging billows, to dash her to pieces, the frighted mariners hesitate not to lighten her by casting out their richest wares into the deep. So do ye. If you would be saved, love not the world; renounce it, whatever it may cost. You cannot carry it with you, whether voyaging or journeying, on the way to heaven. Renounce it, and come, by faith and repentance, to Christ. Do you ask what you shall have in return? Christ will be your's, and in him you will inherit everlasting life. This promise contains in it the inestimable blessings of forgiveness of sin, sanctification of nature, every grace needful to support, guide, and cheer you on your way, entrance into heaven at death, the redemption of the body from the corruptions of the grave in the morning of the resurrection, and the exaltation of the whole man to the beatific vision of God and the Saviour, where there are "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

Thus blessed is the portion of the man who, having been convinced of his lost condition by nature, has been brought to humble himself, and

surrender to the Gospel-scheme of salvation. To him "Christ is made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." He "walks no more after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" enjoys peace of conscience, and holy communion with God through Christ; and is enabled to pass through all the fluctuations of his present state in the delightful and animating expectation, that "when Christ, who is his life, shall appear, then shall he also appear with him in glory!" God grant that this may be the portion of those who read these pages, to the praise of the glory of Divine grace. Amen.

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